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SERMONS.

SERMONS

ON

DUTIES BELONGING TO SOME

OF THE

CONDITIONS AND RELATIONS

OF

PRIVATE LIFE.

BY JOHN G. PALFREY, D. D.

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Unitarian.

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TO

THE CONGREGATION

WORSHIPPING IN

BRATTLE SQUARE, BOSTON,

THESE

SERMONS ARE INSCRIBED,

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

OF HAPPY YEARS PASSED IN THEIR SERVICE,

AND WITH HEARTY PRAYERS FOR

THEIR TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL WELL-BEING,

BY

THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,

JOHN GORHAM PALFREY.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Most of the sermons, which compose the following volume, were written at the close of the year 1829. Five, then repeated, — viz. the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first, — were written at different times, some years before; and one, the twenty-second, more recently. The peculiarity of several of the subjects in the course, and the detail with which it gave occasion to treat some questions, attracted to these more attention than was usual with my sermons, and I was repeatedly requested to publish them. This would not have been in my power immediately, as, on account of a free use of arbitrary characters, the manuscripts were unfit to go to the printer; and new engagements, which soon after came on, dismissed the idea from my mind. It would probably not have been resumed, but for the kindness of two friends, who lately proposed to make the copies. Had I been able to command time to make them, it is likely that the revision would have been more thorough. In reading over the sermons, I discover, particularly, chasms in the discussion, which I should

have been glad to fill; and a want of proportion in some instances, between the extent to which a subject is pursued, and its relative importance, owing, partly, to accidental causes, such, for example, as similar subjects having been treated, or not, near the time. Repetitions of the same topic in different connexions do not give me the same concern; I doubt, whether, if the thing were to do over again, I should study to avoid such. Nor did I see reason to digest what is said on each subject, into one composition. The volume is not a treatise, nor a collection of treatises, but of discourses, pronounced in the usual routine of parish service. I supposed that it was best to allow them to retain their identity of this kind, and to relieve the reader's attention, like the hearer's, at convenient intervals, taking up the subject again, when it was continued, with a brief recapitulation of what had before been said.

Divinity College, Cambridge;
March 25th. 1834.

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SERMON I.

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO THE YOUNG.

1 TIMOTHY V. 1.

ENTREAT — THE YOUNGER MEN AS BRETHREN.

For a mind with any pretensions to considerateness, not to say piety, it is impossible to look at the young without strong feelings of interest. Here are beings, susceptible of all the pleasures and pains incident to man's rational and immortal nature; capable of serving or displeasing God, serving or harming the world, serving or ruining themselves for time and for eternity. Which side of the question is to result, is now a problem. It is a problem soon to be solved, and the solution is their own to give. Experienced men tremble and sadden, when they think how much of weal or woe in this world depends on that decision. Christians exult or shudder, as they mark one or the other course taken in youth towards the world of retribution. No one can be surprised that, in the passage which furnishes our text, St. Paul, among other directions to Timothy for the administration of his charge over the church of Ephesus, is found instructing him to address the exhortations of religion expressly to the young; that is, (for, in the context, he

distinguishes this class from that of children,) to those who, having passed their period of childhood and strict pupilage, have reached the age when they must look for themselves at their dangers and obligations, though not that when it is common to assume the relations of what we call mature and active life.

Paul's advice to his young coadjutor ought, in this as in other respects, to be viewed as a directory for the practice of christian ministers. Accordingly, at the present time, omitting all consideration of the general claims of religion alike upon every mind, I would attempt to set forth some of the reasons, why it peculiarly concerns themselves and the community, that gospel truth should be received with impression and effect into the minds of the young. My young friends, you know that this is a subject of vast import to you. May God give us grace to speak and hear under a serious sense of this; and whatever may be said according with his will, may he bless it to your lasting good.

I. A consideration which might properly be first presented, relates to the importance of the young as a class in society; being, as they are, the class to whose care all the great interests of society are about to be transferred. But this, as it will come under our notice in a little different connexion, I pass over for the present, to notice briefly also,

II. In the second place, the special demand of youth to be subjected to christian influences, on account of its being an age especially improvable.

1. Here, indeed, childhood has, in one respect, the advantage over it. Childhood offers no obstacle, the result of previous influences, to such impressions as it is desired to make; and the permanent bias of the life is commonly taken in its earliest years. Such as is the character of the child, such essentially, only in fuller development, it is likely that the character of the youth will be. But this calculation is

one of no more than probability, nor can it be anticipated with nearly as much confidence, that the dispositions of childhood will adhere to youth, as that the character of the youth will be matured in the man. For a general rule, that is a severer trial of the principles, which takes place when parental superintendence in its strictness ceases, than what is sustained at any later period of life. A parent may well rejoice, if, as far as his children's practice yet enables him to judge, he has succeeded to establish right rules of conduct in their minds, and inure them to corresponding habits. But he does not forget, (and though he remembers with satisfaction, it is a satisfaction mingled with its full share of anxiety,) that the time must come, when, if they have anything of the considerate character of mind which he desires to witness in them, they will no longer be content with an implicit acquiescence in the rules of duty which he had enforced, but will subject them to a rigid scrutiny to learn what is, in truth, their obligation. That is a period of profound interest, which may be expected to occur in the youth of every reflecting person, when he comes to inquire whether the lessons, on which he has been taught to practise, are to be dismissed as nursery tales, or acknowledged for truths of sublime and eternal moment. That question rightly and seriously determined, the character of the life may, with no little confidence, be augured to have been determined with it; and the age when, from the growth of the understanding to that point that its curiosity is likely to be excited, and its conclusions to be permanently settled, that question is wont to arise and be resolved, is certainly to be regarded as an age when the character, under proper treatment, will receive a vast accession of stability and force, and when it demands such treatment by an imperious claim.

2. Again; youth is a peculiarly improvable age on account of its susceptibility of religious influences. The religious

sentiment is undoubtedly an inestimable acquisition at any period of life; and to what maturity the fruit may be carried, at whatever time the seed be sown, is not for any man to calculate. But, on the other hand, there seems little hazard in affirming, that to give the heart to God when its affections are yet fresh, unpalled by any weariness, and unchilled by any disappointment, — when it is more a habit than in after years, to give the whole heart without reserve to whatever pursuit it chooses, — there can be little hazard in affirming, that this is to make the choice of the religious life under a great advantage. The ardor and disinterestedness, which are reckoned characteristic qualities of youth, are qualities in full harmony with a distinguished religious excellence. To those who are altogether untaught by a painful experience to moderate their attachments, it is easier to love God with all their soul and strength, and their neighbor as themselves; and the flame of devotion and benevolence, fed thus from the first rich fountains of the spirit, will keep its brightness and intensity when other emotions may grow dull. Give yourselves now, my young friends, to God's service, and you do it with your capacity unimpaired and complete to attain the highest excellence, and experience the fullest satisfactions, of the christian character. Delay it, and even if you find the will hereafter to do what should now be done, you will also find that time has mournfully crippled your power, and subdued your spirit, for the work.

III. But I proceed to a third consideration, and that on which I am longest to dwell. Youth peculiarly demands the blessing of christian influences, because it must needs be characterised as, in some respects, a peculiarly tempted age.

The causes, which make it so, are of course such as the lapse of time removes. But, if they take effect, they none the less leave abiding consequences. While some of the

passions are never stronger than at that period, others, whose tendency is to divide and counteract, and so moderate, their control over the mind, are as yet in very feeble development. Imagination, a power whose moral influence is so much overlooked, has attained a full growth, while the judgment, which should correct it, is as yet unripe, and experience has not passed its infancy. With much partial vigor, there is wanting that balance of the faculties which belongs to true wisdom; and with many transports, there is missed that due proportion and blending of the affections, which makes real, that is, tranquil happiness. The salutary discipline of disappointment has not yet checked extravagant expectations, and discouraged from rash enterprises; and, in the pride of its untried strength, youth is quick in resentment, and impatient of control. Some of the amiable distinctions of youth are nevertheless snares to it. Its high sense of honor sometimes leads it to prefer what is only reputed good, to that which really is so; and its warm, unsuspicious affections expose it to the evil communication of ill-selected friendships. In youth, too, there is less than at other periods of life, of that supervision of others, which is found a powerful aid to the virtue of the most virtuous men. Childhood has a close domestic oversight for its shield, while the age to which it gives place is trusted with a large liberty of its own. It goes forth to act upon the principles which have been impressed. With youth begins the trying experiment upon the power of independent agency. The ampler discretion of mature life, again, is controlled by its greater publicity. Its conduct is subjected to the scrutiny of a vigilant and fault-finding world, a restraint which youth is not made to feel by any means in its fullest force. A man holds what most he may be supposed to value by the tenure of a character without reproach, while youthful irregularities are more likely to escape remark, or, worse, may be in a

degree connived at. Especially is this release from restraints imposed by others' observation to be remarked of that large proportion of young persons in a populous city, who, (resorting thither with a view to preparation for their future employments in life,) at the very period when their characters, be they where they might, must be exposed to a critical experiment, are removed from the care of their natural advisers, and the observation of all whose good opinion they have been used to regard; and at the same time that they acquire this unaccustomed liberty, are introduced to a scene so new, that there is danger of their being dazzled and bewildered by it to the degree of confusing their moral perceptions, and to companions, among whom it may well be feared that there will be some prepared to exert a corrupting influence. The danger of such persons is great, and well may anxious parental counsels follow, and parental prayers ascend for them.

But youth, inexperienced, ardent, credulous, rash, exposed by its very generosity, cannot but be called, under the most favorable circumstances, a peculiarly tempted age; though, while the essential occasions of peculiar moral danger to youth are sufficiently perceptible, they are so blended together, and manifest themselves so much in union, that, in attempting to specify, it may not be easy to arrange them under a strictly logical division.

1. There are, for instance, mistakes of different kinds, into which youth systematically falls in the search of happiness. Uninstructed by experience, how apt impulse is to betray, — it is prone to take counsel of its impulses. On the worst disorders into which youth is thus cheated, it cannot be expected that I should enlarge; and, God be thanked, in that state of society with which we are best acquainted, there appears less urgent reason for caution against them, than there has been in other times, and is in

other places. The period seems to have gone by with us, when a foolish and mischievous excess, which called itself gaiety and good fellowship, was recognised as the sign of a young person of spirit. With a better justice to truth and good morals, intemperance in one age or sex is coming to be looked upon with as little favor as in the other; — nay, with some sense of its deserving the severest disapprobation in the age and the sex where most it has been tolerated, on account of the power of longer and wider usefulness which in them it prostrates. A deplorable absurdity by which society was long abused, suffering a licentiousness in one sex which it visited with the heaviest penalties in the other, is also fast doing away, and with it a silly maxim is losing its currency, which represented what was called a reformed (meaning in truth commonly no more than a sated) profligate, as a fit object of domestic confidence. I pass from these subjects; but, if there should be any present disposed to think that any degree of excess or libertinism is a tolerable thing in youth, let them listen to what may be said in a word on the other side of the question; and if they persist, let their future experience declare whether it is not as certain as God's own truth. The vicious indulgences of youth will poison the whole mind. They will infuse corruption into the fountain; and what infusion is there, of virtue afterwards to cleanse the stream? It is not of the loss of health, of time, of habits of industry when they ought to be forming, of a good name when it would affect the whole prospects of life, — it is not of such losses that I speak. It is possible that good care or good fortune may avoid some of these, and that reformation may retrieve others. But the man's criminal indulgence has made him gross. It has permanently dulled his relish for pure enjoyments of the mind and heart. To use a poet's words, it has 'hardened all within, and petrified the feeling.' It will be next to a miracle, if a mind

so dealt with should ever again become capable of delicate and elevated sentiment; if an animal coarseness should not cling to it like its life.

2. I pass to a less palpable and less certain error, into which the young are prone, in their eager chase after happiness, to fall. There are few subjects on which, while the thoughtless can settle it in a breath, the wise are so embarrassed to speak, as that of the rules and the moderation to be observed in sharing in the pleasures of social intercourse. On the one hand, we are made to enlighten each other's minds, and cultivate each other's affections, in society; not to speak of such inferior things, as opportunity being there provided for present innocent enjoyment, and a school for the culture of the manners which beautify life, and the taste that gives an added relish for God's bounties. Questions respecting social intercourse, then, must be questions of the form which it ought to take. Indiscriminately to condemn the forms which in civilized and christian communities it has taken, is a harsh and ill considered step, unless we are able to show that their absence, or the adoption in their place of some others which we might propose, would not lead to greater evils than we can charge upon those now existing; besides that it would tend to generate a morose and censorious habit of mind, and to withdraw us from the intercourse of cultivated, and wise, and religious persons, whose society we might find on all accounts a blessing to us. On the other hand, there is serious danger of excess, especially as it is the young who are chiefly concerned; the young, who have not the experience that would warn them against it. With their feelings, it may well be feared that the pleasures of society will become to them the most interesting subject, and take up altogether a disproportionate share of their time, their minds, and their hearts. A parent who has not been faithful by seasonable

discipline to instil into the mind of his child high principles of duty, and sober views of life, may well tremble when the time of exposure comes to the bewildering influences of the world of fashion; so real is the danger not only that the most improvable period of life will be made to pass without fruit, making the life what the year would be without a spring, but that a character of mind will be formed, which gives no promise of happiness in this world of useful action, or in the future world of spiritual enjoyment. To be conspicuous in the world of fashion, however well it may be borne when such a thing comes about without purpose, can be the object of no wise young person's ambition. There are only a few individuals, of the strongest minds, who have proved equal to that trial; and the reason why such minds have sustained the trials of the station is, that they have been too strong to covet or prize such an eminence. But in cases of less distinction, and accordingly less exposure, while the inconsiderate are applauding, the judiciously affectionate too often see cause only for concern or grief. Most painful is it, to see a period, given for usefulness and improvement, wasted in hollow gratifications of the present hour, and the energies of an immortal intellect expended on such unprofitable cares. Alarming is the thought of the preparation which a mind engrossed with such concerns is making for eternity, and most sad is the thought, even, of the sacrifice which it is making of the happiness of future earthly years; for the tastes which it has formed will be lasting, while the gratifications which they demand will soon cease to be what they were in the period of thoughtlessness, inexperience, and novelty, — and querulousness, vacancy, and discontent will prove the hard inheritance of age. Let christian parents be thoughtful to fortify their children betimes against such dangers, by impressing on them beforehand just views of those great purposes of life,

which, alike in youth and age, true wisdom and regard to true happiness demand should be pursued; and, as long as their authority lasts, let them use it in discouraging those tastes for expensiveness, display, and undue devotion of time to amusement, which, in any station of life, can do their children nothing but mischief. And let the young show that they are not so weak, as to suppose happiness to be promoted by any sacrifice of duty or improvement to present pleasure. Let them manifest a worthier ambition than that of being the lightest and idlest among the gay. Let it not seem, as if, having passed the industrious preparatory season of childhood, they thought that the period of actually entering upon life was the time to dismiss from their minds all thought of its solid cares and weighty obligations. And let it, once more, be the care of those who have influence in society, to put and keep the forms of social intercourse on their proper footing, so that the young, while experiencing all its advantages, shall be as much as possible protected against its dangers; discouraging all extravagant expenditures and show, and all unreasonable appropriation of time. If the young are the hope of society, and if the introduction to extended social intercourse is, for good or ill, a trial to their characters, this is a most serious subject for the attention of good citizens and christian men, whose judgments the community will respect.

3. The dangers to which youth is exposed in different ways from an indiscreet love of pleasure, have been dwelt on at such length, in speaking of youth as a tempted season, because that distribution of the passions is not entirely without foundation, which makes love of pleasure to be the great betrayer of youth, as ambition is that of mature life, and avarice of age. Other moral dangers of youth are yet to be named, which, though somewhat miscellaneous, all admit of being traced to that undue self-esteem, which ex-

perience of life, with its reverses, and disappointments, and mortifications, has not yet come to banish. Youth is confident, and will not deliberate. It is headstrong, and will not be advised. It is positive, and impatient of contradiction. It presumes upon its powers, and scruples not to undertake disproportioned tasks. It presumes on its good fortune, and takes imprudent hazards. It is rash in forming friendships, and as rash and hasty in provoking and resenting. It is eager to take a part without giving itself time to form a judgment, and it is as impetuous in the support of a party, as it was sudden in the choice. It is inclined to feed its self-love by parading its accomplishments; and, in the same spirit, it is prone to fall into various affectations, imitating what in one or another has appeared to please, or devising attractive singularities of its own.

You may say, my friends, that there is less reason to be anxious about such follies, because time will certainly bring the discipline which is needful to correct them. But the benefit of that discipline will have to be secured at great cost. Self-distrust and moderation, taught by experience, make one of the bitterest lessons which can be learned. Moreover, experience is a long time in teaching those virtues, if it does succeed to teach them at last, and the want of them must all the meanwhile be severely felt, besides that the ill consequences of the errors which they displace, affecting the individual's character and lot, can never be all retrieved. No, my hearers; true wisdom is, to be wise so early, as not to have any ill consequences of past folly to recover from. True wisdom is, to be modest and self-diffident in youth. No one ever neglected that truth, who, if he lived long enough to become wise, did not live long enough to look back with much dissatisfaction, shall I say contempt? upon his former self. That is a merely idle conceit, — time will palpably reveal it to be nothing else, —

which represents caution as a mean, narrow habit of the mind, and temerity as savoring of something frank and generous. You think much of courage and independence, my friends. Show them not by hazarding all on your first impressions, but dare, by a proper reserve till you can proceed on sufficient grounds, to give yourselves opportunity to judge safely and act well. Thus you will best avoid the shame of having wrong opinions to retract, and wrong steps to retrace; and your opinions may then be pronounced, and your course taken, decidedly and vigorously, in the confidence which you will then be entitled to feel that they can be sustained. Be not ashamed to doubt, nor uneasy to be contradicted. No man has learned to judge well, who has not learned not to confide in his first judgments, and patiently to consider, nay, curiously to seek, all reasons which others may advance for dissenting from him. You think much perhaps of a power over others' minds. Cultivate then above all things simplicity of character. No man has so little weight with others, as he who at all events must please them. No man ever became truly great, who had not first learned to discard affectation and pretence, and to be willing to pass for what he was really worth. No man ever did himself justice by implicit imitation of another man, however distinguished. Providence has made us all able to do our best, be that more or less, in our own way, by improving on ourselves. Be entreated to guard against the love of display, in all its forms. It takes care only of the outside of the mind. Of the mind's strength, of all which must do its work, and win its lasting honors, it takes no care, nor touches but to seduce and palsy it. Be prevailed on to guard against that over confidence, which the sanguine spirits of youth embolden. Be persuaded betimes to learn that discretion, which either you will learn hereafter at greater price and to less profit, or else will go on in one

course of mistakes and failures, through all your life. Think it not too much, to try your friends before you choose them. It is not so hard, you will find, as the alternative of having your feelings wounded, your characters jeoparded, and your confidence betrayed. See good cause before you make an enemy. A peevish word may do more to irritate, than many discourses of apology would do to reconcile. Delay long enough to count the cost of the enterprises upon which you commit yourselves, lest the ancient taunt be revived for you, 'this man began to build, but was not able to finish.' Delay long enough to know something of the principles and aims of your party, before you become partizans, lest at some future day of better light, you should wish all the fruits of your ardent exertions done away. Why should a man abjure discretion, because he lacks experience? Why needs a man expose himself, because he is young?

I close as I began, with urging that a momentous question is before you, my friends, and that the risk and responsibility of answering it are your own. Were your parents faithful in your early discipline? Did they instruct, encourage, warn, control, and pray for you? You now stand upon a vantage ground for the labors of life and of piety, and you begin to see what unspeakable benefactors they have been to you. Have they been remiss in their trust? They deserve a reproach from you, though by you it may not be uttered, which, if they had a right sensibility, they would rather follow in your funeral procession than hear. But in either case, becoming your own masters, as it is called, you are becoming the arbiters henceforward of your own lot. It is now yours to build on the foundation, or, less favored, to supply the defects, of parental discipline. Will you suffer the seductions of criminal pleasure, in any form or under any name, to ensnare you? You must lay your account then, — I do not say with early infirmities and

death, which, however, are too probable to be wholly lost sight of, — but with what can scarcely be escaped, in a community where the moral sense is so high, that loss of good name and of public confidence, which clouds over the prospects of life; and with what is certain, that depravation of the soul, which must either seal its doom in the future world, or be removed, if by God's grace so it may be, by a bitter repentance, which at best will not eradicate in this world all traces of the brutality it had contracted. Will you become that vainest vanity, a fashionable trifler? Be assured that, for every flattering deceit that helps to make you so giddy, there will be a misgiving for you in the minds of the wise, and a pang in the bosoms of the affectionate. The one will pity you, and the other will grieve for you, that you are unhappy enough to be so pleased with what is so unsubstantial; that, devoting this precious period of your prime to what will leave no lasting fruit, you are in danger of frustrating all the labors and all the promise of preceding years; that you are in danger of being led to depend for your happiness on what cannot be long possessed, on occupying a place in which you must be soon supplanted, and so of laying up stores of dissatisfaction for your barren residue of life; that you are in danger of doing just what an immortal being ought not to do, and cannot, if he be not so insane as to abandon the interests of his immortality, — living for this present world. Will you suffer your bright views of life to tempt you to heedlessness in conduct; will you let your ardor become presumption? your generosity, disregard of consequences? In a vain trust in your wisdom, which you are not yet wise enough to have discarded, will you reject the counsels of experience, and go on in your own wild way, till the sternest of monitors has taught you better? Will you not be modest, till the world has made you so? Shall your aim be to signalize yourselves? Shall

your early life be all an exhibition? You are candidates, then, for a severe school; but, not having learned earlier what it has to teach, your best friends can have no other wish, but that its correction may be thorough. Disappointments and mortifications are hard to bear; but to finish life with that wilful and self-deceived mind, which they might be over-ruled to cure, is a lot far harder yet.

'But, beloved,' let me say with the sacred writer, 'we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' For not a few of you, it may be hoped, the guiding influences of the christian homes of your childhood, the prevailing prayers of devout friends, the gospel and the grace of God, have not failed to produce something of their due effects. You have looked at the dangers of youth. You appreciate to some purpose its opportunities of improvement and usefulness. You have some apprehension in what its dignity consists. You perceive that your honor and advantage, as well as your duty, require you to walk along its tempted way in the straight path of wisdom, of religious wisdom. You would reward and relieve parental anxieties; you would sustain a just parental pride; you would win the general esteem and confidence; you would be preparing for a happy life; you would be making timely and diligent preparation for the attainment of its supreme object. You would even now be serving your great Master, and becoming subjects for his blessing in life and in eternity. You would be distressed at the thought of exhibiting to his or to human view, that most painful spectacle, which the wise man said it grieved him so to witness, 'a young man void of understanding.' May God of his great goodness, confirm and prosper in you such a spirit! That wish sums up all good wishes for you.

SERMON II.

DUTIES OF THE YOUNG.

PROVERBS XXIII. 15.

MY SON, IF THINE HEART BE WISE, MY HEART SHALL REJOICE.

THE text brings into view the satisfaction which parents feel in the wisdom of their children. In a late discourse we dwelt at some length on some of the moral dangers of youth. Youth has its positive duties too, which it is bound to fulfil, as much as to avoid the other. Youth is mostly regarded as a season preparatory for the cares of mature life. Let us at this time inquire, what a wise use of it is, considered in that character.

I. That wise heart, of which the wise man speaks in the text, will dispose a youth to diligence in preparing himself for the station in life, which he expects to fill.

1. With most of you, my young friends, it is happily necessary that you should be learning some profession, trade, or art, by which to earn your living. Your parents, all of them, feel much anxiety, and some of them make great sacrifices, that you may do this; because they know that on your doing it, and doing it well, are to depend your comfort, your honorable standing, and your usefulnesss in society.

Can you be remiss in doing it, without extreme ingratitude to such friends? Can you neglect it without extreme imprudence, yourselves alone considered? The time due to preparation will forthwith be passed, and when it is passed, however willing then to learn, none would undertake to teach you; nor, under such a disadvantage, will you be at all likely to resolve on then beginning to teach yourself. Has that period been well passed? — life with all its desirable things is before you. You may forthwith benefit others, and win their respect and good will, by the usefulness of labor, and begin to accumulate means for the usefulness of bounty. No man will be entitled to look down upon you, and all worldly blessings, which a reasonable mind can wish, are open to your ambition. Has your time due to preparation been idly spent? — you bid fair to be a burden on society, which will not fail to give you to understand, in various painful ways, that it considers you to be so; and that good luck, as it is called, which is so apt to follow in the steps of good conduct, will never come nigh to you.

2. But you, you perhaps reply, have not your living to get. It may seem that you have not; but, if you affirm that you never shall have, you say a very questionable thing. In a wise consideration of the mutability of human fortune, no man, especially no youth, can promise himself that the time will never come, when he will have only his exertions to depend on for his subsistence; and this being so, no man ought to feel satisfied while unacquainted with any method of turning those exertions to profitable account. No one, thus helpless, is entitled to feel self-respect. There are truly independent men, no doubt, (though by no means are they alone such,) who do not need to labor for their support; but while riches have such a proneness to take to themselves wings and fly away, no man is truly independent, who is unprepared to labor for his support, though coined mines

were in his coffers. Besides, if our own worldly interests do not demand to be advanced by us, the interests of others do. It is the rich man's privilege, to be dispensed from cares for himself, that he may take the more care of others, of individuals and of the public; and if he have not acquired those powers of serving others, which, gratuitously exerted in his time of affluence, would, in a time of necessity, command their price, he foregoes the best benefit of his good fortune.

3. Esteeming nothing beneath the dignity of the pulpit, which has an important place in human duty, I will add that the obligation, presented under this head, is not restricted to one sex. The sphere of female diligence, it is true, is mostly in the prudent arrangements of domestic economy; but though the paths of directly profitable industry are unhappily few, and they are not looked to, as in the other sex, as a universal resource, it is greatly honorable in a female, in whatever condition, to become prepared to maintain her independence, should need be, by devotion to some useful calling. And preparation for those homely, but important cares, which make domestic life respectable and happy, with which wealth is dignified, and station borne gracefully, which cause what ought to be competence really to be so, and help to make the best of poverty, preparation for these cares can by no means be innocently neglected by any individual. According to the common course of things, there is a strong probability, (and such probabilities determine our duty,) that young persons of the more retired sex, will in time be placed in situations, where the welfare of those, whose welfare ought to be dear to them, will materially depend on their capacity for household cares. Domestic, no doubt, makes a large part of human happiness; and how far from trivial is the topic which I now am urging, will appear to any one, who will consider, for a moment,

how much the comfort and the credit of every individual home are in the hands of her, who, with greater or less means at command, presides over its order.

II. A wise heart in youth dictates a diligent attention to the general improvement of the mind.

Doubtless, my hearers, our intellect is one of the noblest parts of our nature. From it spring some of the highest pleasures we can know; and, appealing to all our obligations, to God, to society, and to ourselves, it demands careful cultivation at our hands. Various indications of providence determine youth to be the most favorable time for affording it this culture. Youth is comparatively a time of leisure. It is a time, when the attention, solicited by a less variety of cares, may be most closely fixed upon a single object. It is the time when some of the powers of acquisition are in their meridian; and when, (a circumstance this, which has not been enough observed,) the mind's sense of its continually growing strength gives it the most grateful stimulus to effort.

My friends, the opportunities of youth for laying up stores in the mind, which will greatly enhance the dignity and the worth of life, and increase the means of solid enjoyment and usefulness through all its coming years, those opportunities are of unspeakable value, and it is not in any wise heart to neglect them. The different employments, for which youth are destined in life, are indeed of a more or a less intellectual character. Some are to serve their generation chiefly by the labors of thought, and others chiefly by the sweat of the brow, and their preparation is now making accordingly. But, on the one hand, there is no profession, whose elementary discipline leads to the study of all subjects, with which a young person should desire some acquaintance; and, on the other hand, there is no mechanical operation so laborious, as absolutely to leave no leisure to such as are engaged in learning it. A portion of that time,

which is not demanded for preparation for a worldly calling, ought doubtless to be reserved for the acquisition of useful knowledge; and that is the proper business in youth, of such as have not occasion to undertake any other. In how many ways particular parts of the knowledge you have acquired may in the course of events become useful to you, it is impossible to foretell. But assuredly all acquisitions you have made will give added honor to any station you may fill; they will establish resources within yourselves, which at all times will give you a feeling of independence, and which circumstances of trial may make ten-fold necessary; they will be a great moral safeguard, by preventing you from seeking, through weariness, worse employments for your time; and they will greatly enlarge your ability to afford pleasure and advantage to others. Especially is this duty to be urged, as, strictly speaking, a universal one, in a country where every individual, however humble, is taught enough in his childhood, to become afterwards his own teacher, and where, in the unembarrassed competition of worth and talent, every man's standing is in such true proportion to the power, which he has made himself capable of exerting over other minds.

With respect to the particular studies, which shall engage the time thus devoted, I shall not, my hearers, undertake to advise; for, as to the principles of such a choice, I am not offering a treatise on intellectual education, and as to the particulars, they are to be determined by individuals in a wise consideration of their individual capacities and occasions. The remark, however, none the less deserves repetition for being so familiar, that the accomplishments, which ought to be aimed at, are rather the substantial than the showy, and such as not only extend the possessions of the mind, but extend too its power for action, both by supplying to it, if one may so speak, more tools to work with, and giving it that strength which is infused by healthy and

vigorous exercise. Not all things, it is to be remembered, that take up time, pay for it. There is such a thing as much pains to small profit. It is possible, as one has said, to be 'very accomplished, and good for nothing.' Ornamental accomplishments no doubt have their worth. They are one more means of fulfilling our destination to make others happy, and they give the last grace where the useful are already possessed; but where these latter are not possessed, the other are but foils to expose the mind's imbecility and vacancy the more. They do but drag the mind's poverty into a notice, which else it might escape. If the theory of that acute writer, who has argued, that in nature and art the ideas of utility and beauty can never be disjoined, be not true in taste, it is certainly true in the aspects of human character. On what we call useful acquisitions in youth, if there is nothing to set them off, the mind delights to dwell. Add the ornamental, and they show so much the better. An advantage of a certain value is then actually obtained; but the ornamental alone are anything but ornamental, in a judicious person's view. — To glance at another topic of the deepest interest; the culture of the mind in youth, it may be feared, is far too much a culture of the imagination, the last faculty which in the young needs to be excited. The perfect state of the mind for tranquillity, action, and virtue, would be that, in which all its powers should have their due mutual proportion. To give them that proportion, — to balance them thus, — is the proper object of the discipline to which the mind is subjected. Stimulate then the imagination of age, for in age it is dull; but curb it in youth, for in youth it is excessive. Such, one would think, would be one of the most unquestionable dictates of good sense. But such is not the uniform practice. I shall not assume to discuss so great a question as that, whether, with a view to forming a nice taste on the style of

the most finished writers, an undue proportion of works of poetry and fiction is commonly put into the hands of the young; but, as far as they have the selection of their own reading, we cannot wonder that their choice, when they are not more than commonly discreet, should fall too much upon such works. It cannot be otherwise. Because their imagination has grown out of proportion to the other mental powers, it craves the food which will pamper and disease it. My friends, be persuaded to watch yourselves, (that is sufficient, and that is greatly important,) in relation to this influence. What you want, in entering upon life, is a sober and informed, not an imaginative, that is to say, a deluded mind. Your wisdom and safety are, to know beforehand what life is. The books, of which I am speaking, read anything like exclusively, or read at all without the correcting exercise of a serious judgment, will lead you to believe it to be just what it is not, and you will go into it educated for all sorts of disappointments and mistakes. The case is not singular. A young mind finds itself delighted with the combinations of perfect convenience and enjoyment, which a happy fancy has framed. They are not impossible in the nature of things; and, continually plying itself with such representations, it comes to look on them as real. It finds a new sort of experience in this imaginary world, and to this it conforms its expectations. It comes to look for combinations in human character, which are never found there, but belong only to ideal life; and thus its sound moral judgments are disturbed, the good, in a feigned union, which can never take place, reconciling it to the evil. It comes seriously to look for effects without adequate causes, as fancy is at liberty to paint them, and so is trained to make absurd calculations. In its all erroneous estimate of things, it is likely to take steps which will put its feelings to many a severe trial; and while, by a painful experience, it is un-

learning the acquisitions of its youth, it is likely to contract a disgust for actual life, as it proves to be, which will equally unfit it for serious duty.

My friends, whose minds are forming, shun these dangers. Adorn your minds as much as you will; but take care, first and mainly, to strengthen, regulate, and furnish them. The former work may be honorably and safely dispensed with; the latter cannot. What that life is on which you are entering, that, and nothing else, it is for your advantage to understand it to be. All which you may have done to disqualify yourselves to meet its serious events and duties, will assuredly be productive to you of lasting inconvenience and regret; and every youthful hour which you have wisely employed, will draw through life a train of happy consequences.

III. A wise heart in youth, will dispose to a diligent use of it as a season of religious discipline.

So far all christians must needs agree. If, whenever death may come, consequences of the last interest depend on our having made a religious preparation for it, and if we may die in youth, as well as in age; if a religious discipline be the proper preparation for the best enjoyment of the happiness and the best endurance of the evils, as well as the best discharge of the duties of life; if in youth the character is flexible, and with youth ceases to be so, so that then it can be moulded at will, and, from what it then becomes, can afterwards be with difficulty, and in fact is rarely changed; if in youth temptations threaten less, and time for the solitary discipline of the spirit more abounds, and the influence of others may, to the best advantage, second our own endeavors; if feelings, congenial with piety, are then spontaneous in the mind, which, if no pains be taken to fix them, the solicitudes of after life are apt to wear away; — if these things be so, then there are no

words to over-state the importance of a religious discipline in youth.

But let us look at this a little more closely; for it may be feared, that the practical application of this unanimously admitted truth is much hindered, by want of sufficient consideration of what religious discipline is. What is it? Will you say, the forming of religious habits? Doubtless religious habits, (the habits, in other words, of a life of devotion, integrity, usefulness, and self-denial,) must be formed by every religious man. The force of habit affords no small security, that what the character now is, it will remain; and habits of conduct have a strong reflexive influence, to strengthen those inward dispositions, with which they are in accordance, and of which they are the manifestation. These are good reasons why much use should be made of the power of habit, in our own education and that of others. But there are two reasons against considering the question disposed of by this answer. One is, that the binding force of habit is greatly impaired by a change of circumstances, so that he, whose religion has no deeper dwelling within him than his habits, cannot be relied on to retain any hold on it, if his situation should essentially alter. The other reason is, that the radical and indispensable part of religion is within. It has nothing to do with habits of external conduct; that is to say, except to form and regulate and fix them. It is their parent, not their child. It is incapable of being originated by them. It must be bottomed upon principle.

Will you say, then, that religious discipline is the establishing of religious principle? Of religious principles, certainly; of right, and firm, and mighty religious principles, which, by the necessity of their nature, will excite religious feelings, and secure religious conduct. But how are religious principles to be established? Here it appears

to me, my friends, we have the pressure of the question. To entitle a young person to speak of his religious principles, is it enough, that he implicitly believes, on the representation of some other, (and often, it is to be feared, in a very loose and unsettled way,) that this or that is a doctrine or duty of our religion? The young, indeed, must take, and ought to take, many things, at first, on the word of their elders, else the foundations of knowledge never could be laid; and a truth is none the less a truth, on account of many receiving it, who are unable to show the reason why; — it is not its evidence which is in fault, but their diligence to ascertain it. But, my hearers, in a world of evil communication like this, are not a young person's religious principles exposed to great hazards, if he be unable to show anything of the foundations on which they rest? As his understanding opens, has he not a claim, in this as in other cases, to be instructed, and ought he not to feel it to be a duty to obtain instruction, in the proof and the details of what he has, in childhood, been, in a general way, authoritatively taught? That religion may interest him as it should, ought not his mind to be possessed with it? That it may interest him to his utmost profit, ought he not to seek a distinct acquaintance with its truths and laws? It is not so very compendious a science, that all, which is worth knowing of it, may be picked up by the way. He who gathers all, indeed, which his opportunities permit, be it ever so little, has doubtless enough for his safety. But, on the other hand, the greatest minds have not exhausted the study, nor learned any more in it than they thought it profitable to know; and especially, if a young person's mind is cultivated upon other subjects, while it is without culture in regard to this, is not this a bad omen for his religious character? Is he not in danger of ascribing to an inherent meanness in the subject, what is only attributable to his own ignorance

respecting it; in other words, to his own mean intellectual furniture? Is not, I would seriously ask, a main cause of the indisposition to religion on the part of many, otherwise well informed youth, to be seen in this, — that in other subjects they find something to interest them, because to those their attention has been given; in religion they find nothing of the kind, because they have been at no pains to acquire any ideas in relation to it, which ideas, if acquired, would have been materials for comparison and thought?

I am therefore strongly impressed with the conviction, that religious science, that the system of religious truth and duty, should be made a subject of systematic study by the young, as it is expounded in God's holy word, and in recorded observations of some of the highest minds upon his works and providence. I can conceive no good reason, my young friends, why, while you are wisely using with diligence the precious hours of youth, in storing up knowledge, which you hope will be useful in moulding the fortunes of your future years of life, I can see no good reason why some of them should not be carefully reserved for maturing that knowledge of God and duty, which in all circumstances will make the mind's best wealth, which will render you competent to act your part here, whatever it may be, with honor and success, and whose purpose is, so to speak, to mould the fortunes of your eternity. It is with this, as your experience shows it to be with other departments of knowledge; proficiency in it is the reward of systematic industry. While other opportunities are not to be lost, the periodical leisure of the Lord's day is a rich opportunity for such studies. Be exhorted, by such a use of it, to make that day a blessing to your minds and your souls; a blessing to you through life, and after it.

But I am not saying, that religious discipline consists in acquisitions of religious knowledge. These are to be made

by the young, according to their opportunities; and to forbear diligently to make them, is to forego much pleasure, to lose much improvement, to incur much hazard, and deserve much blame. But the use of religious knowledge, more or less, is to implant and sustain religious principles, inspire religious feelings, and prompt to religious action. Your spiritual improvement, my friends, is to be always in your minds, if you are wise; if you are regardful of your interest here, or of your duty, which is your interest always. Now is the time, by meditation and practice upon them, to establish those principles within you, which will give the best assurance of a prosperous life in the world's account, and, infinitely more, of a truly prosperous life, that which secures life's great objects. Now is the time, in the fresh warmth of your youthful feelings, to lift them up to God in devotion, and spread them out to men in brotherly love. So trained, age will never chill, reverses will not irritate them. Now is the time, with reflection, self-watchfulness, prayer, the taking of good counsel, and the following of good examples, to do that work upon your characters, which, done now, will be effectually, and, not now, it is to be feared, will be never done. Now is the time, in the nobleness of your youthful strength, so signally to foil the powers of temptation, as to secure to yourselves the perpetual mastery. Exhibit to us a religious youth, we shall little hesitate to promise you a religious and honored manhood.

IV. I might go on from this, to name, as a fourth object to be contemplated by a wise heart in youth, the establishing of a good reputation; and certainly it is especially wise to have regard to this, in a community where so great is the demand for well principled talent, and so universal a high sense of it, and so free the sphere for its exertion, that he, who is furnished with this, has enough to begin the world with. Men respect, and place confidence in, and from good

feeling love to favor, and for their own interest's sake are disposed to employ, the youth who has shown that he respects himself; so that constant experience shows us, that, in a worldly calculation merely, taking the chances of life, a good name is a better thing to begin it with, than a large capital. Merit makes friends of strangers, disposed to make up the deficiencies of opportunity, which an adverse fortune has created; and it is not, among us, in the common course of things, for distinguished worth in youth to remain in the back ground, for want of a helping hand. But I do not detain you to dwell on this topic, because he who should have obeyed the other dictates of youthful wisdom, previously remarked on, would have taken the only sure and proper way to establish a good reputation, — that is, by deserving it; and because, though those real present interests, to which it is our wisdom and duty to have regard, have often come into incidental notice in the course of these remarks, I would not dishonor the subject by urging any consideration, which should be exclusively of that character. The well deserved praise of good men is good, in itself and in its consequences; but I trust that I am speaking to those, who will prize the praise of God far more.

That world, my friends, which is offering you its patronage, is also urging its claims. And this brings me again to the topic, which I passed hastily over in the last discourse, and to which I am now to confine myself, in urging, in conclusion, your diligent application to the several duties of your age, which have now been specified; — the topic, namely, of the importance of the young, as a class in society.

How can a deep concern fail to be felt in the character of the young? All the great interests of society are about to be transferred to their care. As yet, my friends, your agency

is limited; but, while we speak, the time is drawing nearer, when your conduct is to have a wide influence on the happiness of other men, on the well being of the community; and what that influence will be, is a question even now determining. You are forthwith to assume the various trusts of society, along with your elders, on an equal ground; and before long you are to displace them; and the spirit, in which you will discharge these, will not remain to be formed, when the time has come for their discharge. It will prove to have been brought from the period which you now are passing. The character of the youth will, with all but certainty, be the character of the man. You may soon be exerting that mighty influence, which belongs to the closer domestic ties. You will unavoidably be putting forth a wider agency by means of your sentiments and example. In the pursuit and in the use of ampler resources than now, you will be benefiting or wronging others. Whatever power, in short, individuals in social life exert over one another, with that power you will be invested, to employ for good or evil, according to the principles which now are establishing themselves within you. The moral tone of society, which is to communicate itself to the next generation, you must aid to give. You are to become responsible for the care of institutions, whose due support deeply concerns the common good. As magistrates or as citizens, you are to take care for the impartial administration of wholesome laws. You are to be trusted with the maintenance of our schools and churches. According as you are faithful or otherwise to your trust, our children will enter upon life under happy auspices, or be defrauded of the rich inheritance which it belonged to you to transmit to them; and the community will enjoy, unimpaired or increased, or will lose, the benefits prepared for it by the generous prospective wisdom of former days. To avoid this hazard is impossible. In the order of nature you

are taking our places; we must needs first share them with, and then resign them to you. When so much is at stake, can your elders think, without a deep solicitude, how you will fill them, or fail, while as yet they may claim the privilege of offering you counsel, to charge you, with a solemn earnestness, to fill them in a manner which God, your consciences, and posterity, may commend?

Nor is youth, by any means, an important age merely for its promise of what will be. The young have already their place in society, and it is a place of prominence and consequence. There is scarcely any power committed to man to promote or hinder the happiness of man, equal to that power which the young possess to gladden or distress parental hearts. Common misfortunes have little force to depress one, who sees his children growing up beneath his eye all that his affection and his pride desire; prepared to enter into honorable competition for the prizes of society; and welcomed to its trusts by those, whom their exemplary youth has assured how safely they may be confided in. And, on the other hand, there is nothing but trust in God, that can do much to sustain a heart, which a child's misconduct has wrung. Is it in the power of the young, my friends, to carry joy into the bosom of every family of which a community is made up, or to aim at its peace a stunning blow; and is it not a great power which is committed to that age, a great responsibleness which lies upon it? Is every young person, in the common course of things, necessarily charged with such a trust for others' good, and can his use of it be regarded with anything approaching to indifference?

Nor is the agency of the young confined even within such limits. In one way, indeed, they must needs exert an influence, mischievous or beneficial, in a most important and extensive sphere. The example of the young, of whatever character it be, has more power over their equals and their

juniors, than that of persons more advanced in life. Besides the intrinsically attractive qualities of that age, youth and childhood naturally sympathise more with youth than with maturer life, and are therefore more prone to imitate it. And thus this age, (exercising a peculiar sway, in its example, at the precise period, when the character commonly takes a permanent direction,) may be said to hold the character of future generations, and accordingly the destinies of the world, to a great extent in its control. Nor by the force of its example merely, does it fill a place favorable to a wide and efficient usefulness. What is there to prevent youth from being a period of various benevolent action, if the disposition be not wanting? It has leisure. It has health. It has tender feelings to be moved by ills, which demand a remedy. It ought to have industry for others' service; and, if not experienced wisdom to decide on the eligible course in embarrassed circumstances, it may be presumed to have judgment adequate to the demands of those much more numerous occasions for useful action, which present no difficulty. No, my friends; we must not wait for the period of mature life to come, before we think that it becomes us to be useful. That age, with all its advantages, will be sure to bring many engagements and perplexities. The young, if they will but be on the watch for opportunities of serving others, will be sure to find them in abundance. So many and so active years ought not to be lost to the great purpose, for which we should desire to live; and he, who is wise, will wish to obtain the advantage of as much practice beforehand as possible, in a work, in which, when his time of full power shall have come, it is his ambition to be distinguished.

But I am intrenching on a part of the subject, which it was my purpose to reserve for a third discourse. For the present I dismiss it, only entreating as brethren those whom it concerns, to consider what are the powers which they can

exercise, the temptations which beset, and the excitements which encourage them; and seriously to inquire, what and how much it is, that God, that the community, that regard to their own best interests, are now demanding at their hands.

SERMON III.

DUTIES OF THE YOUNG.

JEREMIAH III. 4.

WILT THOU NOT FROM THIS TIME CRY UNTO ME, MY FATHER, THOU ART THE GUIDE OF MY YOUTH?

In some late observations on duties of youth, it was our aim to limit ourselves to those of its duties, which belong to it regarded as a season of preparation for mature and more active life. I have now to ask, whether it is not apt to be too exclusively considered in that character. The duties of preparation, of course, refer directly to ourselves alone. But are not the young already members of society, and as such do they not already owe services to society? Must they wait for all their opportunities to be useful? Have they as yet none in their possession? And if not so, is it right, that all the dispositions and the powers for usefulness, which by universal consent they ought now to be forming, should be kept in reserve, without fruit and without exercise, till they shall be of riper years?

Perhaps, my hearers, the young are not sufficiently often reminded of their present place and responsibility in the social system. I fear, that in urging on them the obligation of fitting themselves for what they are to do for others'

benefit hereafter, we leave too much out of view their obligation to attend to what they are capable of doing for the good of others now. I fear, that in holding youth up as the invaluable period of preparation, we too commonly forget, and lead others to forget, that it is a time for action likewise. In addition to the loss of all the good, which the young might be prevented from doing by adopting such an error, it would even go far to prevent them from using their age well, for the purpose to which it would thus be restricted, as a time of discipline merely. Without practice in the labors of social duty, the capacity for them could be but imperfectly acquired for future use; and to confine the attention to cares, however important, whose whole direct relation is to ourselves, tends, in its degree, to narrow and make us selfish.

Is there no opportunity in your present age, my young friends, for duties which we trust you are diligently preparing yourselves to fulfil, when more years shall have brought you ampler opportunity? By what services is it, if at all, let me ask, that, in your mature age, you are to become valuable members of society? Without pretending to an exact or a complete division, I will say, as a specification sufficient for our purpose, that they are those of an upright, a beneficent, and an exemplary life. Justice, active kindness, and the setting of a good example, these are the great points of social duty. By these it is, that human welfare is promoted, and a place in society religiously filled. And occasions and competency for these do not appear to be confined to the period of our ripened strength.

I. That quality, which has been said to manifest man for God's noblest work, honesty, uprightness, integrity, finds occasion for its exercise in the early years of life.

1. I am not about to remind you at any length, my young friends, of the heinous guilt of the grosser forms of dis-

honesty. I trust that I speak to no one, who stands in need of such an exhortation. I would hope that no one hears me, with whom another's property, under any temptation, and with any assurance of secrecy, would not be as sacred as if the world were looking on. If it were otherwise with any individual, I would implore him to consider what else but hopeless ruin, in this life and the life to come, he can suppose to be awaiting him. I would pray him, in such a perilous moment, to reflect whether it be much different from an unpardonable sin, that he is meditating; unpardonable, because such wickedness in youth argues a depravity so radical, as to leave little room to hope that it will ever be repented of. — I would fain believe, that none are here, who need to be warned of the great dishonor and criminality of falsehood, or who ever suffer any, but the simple ingenuous words of truth, to pass their guileless lips. Practised so early in any laxer modes of speech, there is but too much reason to fear, that they have learned a language, of which the world will teach a freer and freer use, till their shame is public, and their doom is sealed.

But, my friends, uprightness is a virtue thorough and exact in its demands. It is not satisfied by a mere forbearance ever to cheat another by a theft or an untruth. The reason why it holds so high a place among the social duties is, that it teaches a scrupulous regard to all the rightful claims which others have upon us. It makes him, whom it actuates, a subject for the perfect confidence of other minds. It is in this character that it is the glory of the mature, and in this it enforces its obligations alike upon the young, who certainly, in their relations to their equals, find similar occasions for equitable conduct, and encounter similar temptations to swerve from it, to what affect riper years.

2. Do you ask me to specify instances, in which the young are to show themselves upright and trustworthy? I answer by referring to some, possibly more likely to be overlooked, than those which are sanctioned by rules of honor among equals. Some of you, with a view to your preparation for a life of business, are placed in situations, where the interests of your employers are committed to your care. They are training you to a knowledge, which, by and by, you are to find valuable; and, as compensation for this, your services have been promised them, and are their due. On your faithful rendering of these services, the prosperity of those, to whom you stand thus related, to a great extent depends; and this a young person of a delicate sense of justice will never suffer himself to forget. Not only will he not mar his employers' interest in the smallest particular himself, he will not knowingly suffer others to do it. Not only will he not prejudice them by any fault, he will not do it by any remissness or negligence. He will not need to be watched, to make him do their tasks conscientiously and thoroughly, to the best of his power. He will not think of defrauding them of his time, which is their property. He will make their interest his own, and be on the watch for proper methods to advance it. As far as his relation to them is concerned, the more advantageous he can make it to them, the better will he be satisfied.

3. And as to those in whom no such trusts are reposed; do no obligations of integrity rest on them? Are you just, my young friends, to whom parental indulgence secures a peculiarly large portion of your youth to be a time of leisure and study, — are you just, if, for want of a proper diligence, you lose the benefit of opportunities for improvement, which have been provided for you at great, perhaps inconvenient cost? Is it an equitable treatment of your friends, thus in fact to defraud them of what, (whether at a sacrifice to

themselves or not,) they were intending to appropriate to your best advantage? — You stand in an important relation to those, who have been selected, either by your parents or the public, to guide and assist your studies; a relation, let me say, which admits of a conduct on your part towards them, equitable or otherwise, honorable or dishonorable. To omit other considerations, they are as sensible of the worth of a fair fame as you can be; and the fame which they desire, (for every right-minded man seeks his fame in his own walk of life,) is to rest on their having succeeded in making you, their pupils, blessings to the community. Are you not chargeable with a shameful injustice, if your sloth or wilfulness defrauds them of that fame? And do you not wrong them, — are you doing that which is to be reckoned right and fair between man and man, — if ever, passing a hasty judgment upon measures of theirs, which, as far as circumstances can render motives probable, are to be presumed to have been dictated by nothing but regard to your good, you endeavor to obstruct or to embarrass them? — Has not the community, which, through its official representatives, is at much pains to secure to many of you the advantages which you possess, has it not a right to complain of injustice done to itself by every instance of negligence or misuse of these advantages on your part? — Is not such negligence a gross wrong to them, whose pious prospective public spirit provided the advantages, which any of you in public institutions are enjoying? You are living in part at their cost. They poured their fortunes into the treasury of learning, to furnish for you means of improvement, which the aggregate fortunes of all the families to which you belong, devoted to this single object, could not collect, (if the collection remained to be made,) in season for you to use them. They provided these means for the purpose, — in other words, they have offered them to you on the condi-

tion, — that you, and through you the public, should be profited by them. If you accept the gift, and at the same time, through your remissness, withhold the condition, do you not deserve, in an important sense, to be qualified by a name, which it would pain you that any one should couple with yours? — Is it strictly upright in any, to put those, who are chargeable for them, to undue expenses, for want of attention or arrangement, or for the sake of gratifying capricious tastes, or an extravagant love of show? Does not a nice, (nay, does not a dull) sense of justice, forbid thus to press hard on those who already are so prompt to do so much? — Let such questions have their consideration, my young friends. They deserve it. And whatever you discern to be the dictates of strict uprightness in respect to them, these follow and you will walk securely. Resolve to give others all their due, and understand the length and breadth of that purpose, — you will find that you have adopted a rule, for which even your early years will furnish frequent application.

II. A spirit of benevolent activity, in the second place, qualifies a man to fill his place well in society.

In saying that this is a spirit, by which the young should be animated, and which in them may find useful exercise, I am aware that I encounter an objection. Beneficence, it will be said, when it extends its action beyond that sphere where certain fixed relations of life define its duties, while it is one of the most indispensable, and (well discharged) one of the happiest, is also found to be often one of the most perplexing of our tasks. It requires experience and discretion; for the fact continually shows that we may do much harm, while we sincerely intend much good. The ardent feelings of youth, and its judgment generally formed on the side first presented, do not afford the right direction in such intricacies; and especially are they not to be trusted, as

experience has sometimes proved, in projecting enterprises of benevolence on a large scale; since, in proportion as the scale is large, the danger from imperfect acquaintance with the nature of the evil to be remedied, is increased, and the manner, in which the agency employed will operate, is rendered difficult to predict.

I am far from being insensible to the weight of this remark; and, while the young too, it must be owned, have their judgment, which, if they be true to their duty in the practice of a proper circumspection, will in most cases, which offer no peculiar difficulty, serve them well, I would be still as far as any one from recommending to the young, to take counsel in this case, more than any other, of their first impressions, or be decided by the feelings which attended them, however generous these may seem to be. It ought to be urged upon the young, that to do real good, it has pleased God should often cost us much consideration; and that to know how to do it variously and extensively, is an attainment; and by no means ought they to be encouraged to suppose, that, for a general rule, the province in which they will be likely most successfully to labor, is that of striking out new paths of useful action, whether in politics, religious charity, education, or common life.

1. But such considerations, it seems to me, are somewhat aside from the subject. We would not indeed have them endeavor injudiciously to make themselves useful according to their ability, but we would not therefore have them forbear to make any endeavors to that end. The experienced discretion of their elders, and their impetuosity and heartiness, seem often to be precisely the elements of useful action, which it is desirable to combine. In a community like this, not a few plans of benevolence, originated by mature wisdom, have stood the proof of satisfactory experience; and, to carry these on to their best results, activity, and zeal,

and that degree of leisure which domestic cares forbid, are often what is chiefly needed. They call upon the young, as the best executive agents for many of their tasks; and, engaging in them, according to their opportunies, with a genuine public spirit, the young may often occupy posts of usefulness, which no others could fill so well; not to say that, when the discretion in such cases shall hereafter become theirs, the practical knowledge, which they will thus have been acquiring, will then stand them essentially in stead. There are, indeed, some very important things for the general good, which the young must do, or they will not be done. For an instance, I will mention the management of schools for religious instruction. To many, and among them I would myself be numbered, it appears that an altogether inestimable amount of good is doing in this way. We believe that there is no institution, which, in proportion as it is well conducted, promises fairer to raise the character of society, while it diffuses the blessings of religion. It is the young who must administer it, for with such a service by their elders more imperative domestic duties would commonly interfere; and if the effects of this work be not greatly over-estimated, the young, who have opportunity, talent, and disposition for it, will prove to have been among the most important benefactors of men, and the most useful servants of God.

2. Nor in the established relations of life, (though the place of the young, indeed, cannot be maintained to be that of the highest responsibility,) are they by any means left without the power of rendering essential services. The influence of the parent over the child gives to his agency, it must be owned, an importance entirely peculiar; but still what a vast sum of happiness is a good son or daughter, brother or sister, made the happy instrument of imparting to kindred minds. How much may be done by them, to

whom a good providence prolongs the blessing of parental care, — how much may be done by them, in innumerable ways, which a willing spirit will help them to discover, to relieve the cares, and lighten the labors, and rejoice the hearts, of those to whom they owe the best of all that they can do. What incessant acceptable tokens of good will are the spontaneous expressions of fraternal love. And such is the happy constitution of these relations, that whatever service is rendered in their proper spirit is valued not for its usefulness alone, but doubly for the affectionate feelings of which it is the pledge.

III. Men serve their generation by the exhibition of a good example; and, on the whole, it may perhaps be said of the vast majority of good men, that no other service which they render is of equal importance to this. The other agency of most good men is in great part limited to daily cares, and services to others on the scale of contracted means. Their example is the property and the blessing of all who know them. In other gifts they must needs economise. Their example is a rich gift of united temporal and spiritual blessings, bestowed freely and entire on whosoever will accept it.

Can the young, my friends, do no good by the exhibition of a good example? Who, let me ask, does so much mischief by a bad example as a wilful youth? The bad influence of men's vices is in no small measure neutralized. The worst are known for what they are; they are disreputable, and they are shunned. No one would think of imitating them, till he was so far sunk, that in imitating them, he would not have much to lose. The wickedness of the young is not yet discovered; or some show of better qualities, not yet extirpated, seems to redeem it; or it is still hoped they will amend; and thus, not yet denounced nor disgraced, they have full opportunity to employ the influence of the

standing, which by sufferance they retain, to warp to evil, unsuspicious and undiscerning minds. Their ill example acts on those, in whom neither principle nor habit can yet be presumed to be in all their strength; whose characters are pliant; whose attachments are thoughtless and ardent; whose perceptions are obscure; and thus it comes to pass, as has been said, that, from the advantageous position which they hold, and the flexible material on which they act, the worst, that is the most hurtful examples, which are set, are examples of vicious youth.

Is there no compensation for all this evil? Has providence so disposed this influence of youth, that, misused, it will accomplish much injury, and, well used, will do little good? No, my young friends; listen to no such libel on God's wisdom. Try the experiment, and you will assure yourselves that it is not so. Say from this time, 'my Father, thou art the guide of my youth,' and from this time you will find that you have begun to be benefactors, to an incalculable extent, to those among whom you move. It is the young whose characters are forming and changing. Those of their elders are more fixed, and accordingly less in danger from ill influences, and less accessible to good. It is for the young, then, that the influences of good or bad example, as well as others, are most to be sought, and to be shunned. And example, again, has most power over the young. Experience puts us more on our guard against others' influence. One of the habits of mind, which most surely it teaches, is that of a discrimination, which, separating between the different ingredients combined in a character, leaves us less exposed to be won by the display of a few brilliant qualities. And years too are apt to teach us a pride in our own peculiarities, which indisposes us to relinquish them, for the sake of adopting the peculiarities of others. — The character of youth, then, being most subject to all influences, and also

peculiarly susceptible of the influence of example, by whose example is it that the young are most likely to be swayed? Doubtless by the example of the young. It is with their equals in age, that most of their time is passed. It is with the feelings of their equals that they most fully sympathize. It is in association with a youthful generosity, and lightness of heart, and fearlessness of evil, that whatever solicitations, whether to good or ill, may address them, will assume their most attractive shape. My young friends, by every kind and manly feeling which you entertain towards your associates, be entreated to attend to this influence, and use it well. Do you wish them happy now, and do you wish that they may prosper in the world? Reflect that it is in your power, to give essential aid towards what is mainly needful to ensure that wish. Regard yourselves as delegated in this, (as in truth you are,) to a great office of benevolence. For every associate, whom you can number, you have indeed a large power to mould to honor and usefulness another mind, and send joy along with it into another home. Do you but set the example of a strict purity, a rigid uprightness, a steady diligence, and a disposition to all kind acts, and be assured, that, doing no more, you will be winning many to the same ways of pleasantness. But, this done, you will, if you are consistent with yourselves, desire to do yet more; you will desire to set the example, not only of an outwardly blameless, but of a Christian conduct. Nothing short of this is the limit of a truly noble youth's ambition. You will desire to make your heavenly father's will in all things the guide of your youth, that so you may be in all things faithful guides to those whom you would serve. Do this, my young friends; let it be seen and known, that you cleanse your way by taking heed thereto according to God's word; let your life be a life of devotion, as well as of innocence, and of such usefulness as suits your age; let it appear, that the faith of

Jesus supplies the spirit which animates, and the rule which directs you; throw the great weight of your influence over many forming minds into the scale of his religion; give them cause to acknowledge that you are so excellent, that you have such a command over their reverence and love, because you have learned of him; and well may it be asked, what ministry of benevolence there is, fulfilled by men or angels, on which your heavenly father will look down with a more profound complacency than on yours.

The character of the young, my hearers, important, as we have described it, in all times and places, has in some respects a peculiar importance in this country and age. The improved forms of education, which have been generally introduced, have made the young capable of exerting an increased influence on the condition of society, and given them at the same time a better acquaintance with their power. The natural consequence is, that the sphere of their agency is enlarged; and what principles shall determine its character, is made a question of much additional interest. Under our constitution of society, youth, as a preparatory season merely, is to be viewed with a peculiar solicitude. Where every young man is soon to have a voice in public measures, — a voice in determining questions, which intimately affect the common welfare, — it deeply concerns the public, whether he is in a course of preparation to acquit himself of that solemn trust corruptly, or heedlessly, or honestly. Besides, the demands of our community bring forward the young earlier than elsewhere on the stage of life, and cause more weighty affairs to be committed to their management. The periods of discipline and action are more blended, and thereby a more urgent necessity is created for using with a wise diligence the time of preparation. In the circumstances, there is no other safeguard against errors being committed

on a large scale, and too probably such as cannot be retrieved.

And as, in our country, there exist some peculiar reasons for addressing religious exhortation to the young, so, in our portion of it, some peculiar encouragements are presented. For a general remark, it is not too much to say, that an excellent spirit prevails among the youth of our city. Domestic moral and religious instruction is extensively an object of diligent and judicious attention. Compared with other places and earlier times, the moral standard in our schools, much as we desire to see it higher, is already high. The young often carry from them a generous sense of character, and not seldom a disposition to devote themselves to the best objects of benevolence, which can employ their age; and to the honor of those, whose earliest impressions have been received elsewhere, it should be said that many of them bring hither, and retain and strengthen here, principles, which make them examples now of what the youthful character should be, and well entitle them to those expressions of confidence and regard, which a grateful community is waiting to bestow on their maturer age. Nay, since truth so encouraging ought all to be told, I will even say, that this characteristic of the society, to which it is our happiness to belong, is strikingly exhibited where its test must be owned to be the strictest of all. It is our privilege to witness the very singular spectacle of the sons of the rich, the most tempted and exposed class of society, (excepting only the children of the abjectly poor,) not fulfilling here what, from the experience of other places, one would have some warrant for calling their all but universal destination; not emulating each other in the extravagance of vice; not wearing an expensive indolence, or a giddy profligacy, for badges of their rank; not wasting their lives even in the less mischievous vanities, for which they have leisure and means; but

cherishing a nice sense of character, entering on an equal competition with others in every worthy art, devoting themselves to honorable and useful occupations, not seldom rendering efficient aid of every kind to public objects, not seldom truly religious persons. So many are the instances, which more or less correspond to this description, in the class of the young referred to, that one need not hesitate to say that a high tone of moral sentiment exists among them, — that, (if I may elevate so vain a word to so serious a meaning,) it is absolutely the fashion among them to be exemplary; so that, in our best society, to be notoriously profligate is not only to attract personal dishonor, but to profess profligacy, is to lose caste. Examine where we will, we shall be but the more satisfied, that this state of things is something like a distinctive trait, as I have said, of the society in which we live. For myself, I can truly affirm, that there is no other feature of it, which I contemplate with more delight; nor, with a spirit like this in such general action, with such bright examples to recommend the character which youth should bear, and so much influence, direct and indirect, already exerted to diffuse it, can I see anything but strong encouragement for labors aiming at the improvement of this most interesting age.

Wilt thou not then, — let me address myself in one word more to every ingenuous youth who hears me, — wilt thou not then from this time cry unto God, my father, thou art the guide of my youth? I say not, my friends, take the word of one who can wish you nothing but good, but take the uncontradicted testimony of all experience, that you will assuredly do this, if you but see clearly wherein your true honor and advantage lie. We know that you have interests of altogether unspeakable moment at stake, pertaining to your immortal nature; and we are persuaded,

that the sooner you make this resolution, the sooner those interests will be secure. We are aware how much harm you may do, how much unrelieved distress you are likely to suffer in the world, if the purpose that leads to other consequences be not formed betimes. We trust that many happy and useful years of earthly life await you; and to the end that those years, few or many, may be useful, and honored, and happy, we affectionately entreat you to form without delay the resolution of our text; and we devoutly implore the father of mercies, and God of all grace, to give you at all times strength to keep it. Let this prayer be answered, and there is little else, which a judicious affection would care to ask in your behalf.

SERMON IV.

DUTIES OF THE AGED.

PROVERBS XVI. 31.

THE HOARY HEAD IS A CROWN OF GLORY, IF IT BE FOUND IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

While the wish for long life is almost universal, that old age, to which lengthened years must bring us, is not commonly regarded as a happy part of life. We are apt to think of the old man, as of one whose condition admits of few pleasures, and whose relish for those few is dull. His activity, we say, is crippled. Infirmities have crept upon him, and his spirits sympathise with the decay of his frame. His time of hope, the great quickener of the mind, is over, for his purposes have been all defeated, or fulfilled. Experience of life has taught him the unhappy habit of distrust. He has retired from the stage of action, and the world no longer cares for him. He has lost his friends, and has no longer occasion to care much about the world.

Our text, however, speaks of a course, in which old age becomes a most desirable attainment. The hoary head need not droop; far otherwise; — its frosts are diamonds in a crown of glory, to be reasonably coveted, to be gratefully

and proudly worn, if it but be found in the way of righteousness. Let us analyze this specific for a happy old age, that so the prescription may profit some of us even now, and others hereafter, whose days it may please Providence to prolong.

The constituent parts of righteousness are purity, benevolence, and devotion. The hoary head, then, which is a crown of glory, is that of an innocent, useful, and devout old age. But under each of these divisions, again, is comprehended a variety of particulars, which we may do well successively to consider.

I. The easiest and the most indispensable part of innocence in old age is, freedom from sins, to which that period of life is either particularly adverse, or not particularly prone. Compared with other periods of the same constitution, old age is cold and quiescent. Years quench the fever of the blood. They indispose for the venturous struggles of ambition. The unsubstantial colors on 'the bubble reputation,' have less glitter to the eye, over which their film is spread. — A restless aspiring after honors and notice, in old age, betokens to every observer an incorrigibly light and undiscerning, as well as selfish mind. Its true dignity is seen to consist in retirement from the hot contest for dignities, which embroils men of greener years. — A libertine old age is, by universal consent, as odious as it is unnatural. The hoary profligate is owned to be no fit company for any one, except for those whom all others abandon. An instinctive horror is felt at his approach, and a perfect contempt follows him away. The young, whom he would be thought to resemble, deride while they loathe him. From such lips, impurity loses its power to seduce, or even amuse, the weakest or the foulest. They only half smile at the loose jest, and they are utterly ashamed of the ribald; and happily is it ordered, that the naked deformity of his wick-

edness, so far from tempting younger sinners to an imitation, unavoidably inspires in them a disgust, which with some minds will go as far as anything to lead to a reform. He is, and he is perceived to be, if not the most appalling, the most despicable example of one, in whom moral corruption has disarmed all opposition, not only of the moral sense, but of influences of a lower nature; insinuated itself through the whole soul; tainted its deepest springs; assumed an absolute possession; spread an all-enclosing crust of leprosy.

1. But we may pass from the consideration, in this place, of sins so peculiarly offensive in advanced life, because, seeming as they then do to all, unnatural, it is reasonable to infer that they are uncommon, and because, if old age does not cure them, there is small likelihood that preaching will. Of the sins, by which the period of age is understood to be most easily beset, the passion of avarice is one. Whether it be, that as objects of the desires of earlier life lose their attraction, money comes to claim for itself an engrossing regard; or that, as we find some of our powers of accumulating fail, it seems necessary to use more carefully those, which remain to us; or that a long experience of life, and observation of the various uses of wealth, tempts one to reckon it an eminently desirable possession; or that, as some other claims on the attention of dependants and of the community grow less, one is disposed to secure their good offices through that power of serving them, which money gives; or that, since the old, in the common course of things, have those around them, whom they need to provide for, Providence, in the spirit of many other of its wise arrangements, has attached a saving disposition to this period of life, a disposition, which, unregulated, will run into excess; — whether it be from one or another, or all of these causes, certain it is, from all observation, that the undue

love of money is a sin, against which the aged need to be especially on their guard, in like manner as other moral dangers especially menace the other periods of life.

It is not, that the aged should refuse to practise a careful economy. This is honorable in them, as it is honorable in all men; and it may be peculiarly honorable in them, as their occasions for it may be peculiar. It is not, that they are to relinquish a course, which they have marked out for themselves, because others may think it niggardly; for the judgment, which dictated it, may be a sound and right one. But parsimony is a vice as capable of being understood as any other, and in young or old it is a great vice. It tempts, no doubt, often to acts of palpable injustice and oppression. Where it is not strong enough for this, it tampers with the conscience on those frequent occasions of the adjustment of mutual rights, where a pure, a lofty, and nicely discriminating conscience needs to judge. It makes a man unprofitable. It chills his sympathies. It trains him to be suspicious and artful. There is scarcely a worse foe, indeed, to the virtues which belong to man as a social being. Nor on his character as a religious being, does it threaten to exert an influence less fatal. The passion is essentially anti-spiritual, if such a word may be permitted. It is essentially discordant with the devout and heavenly affections. It strikes us as most monstrous, because most singular, in the young; but, on some accounts, the wonder should rather be, that the aged can be guilty of it. As they have less of life before them, to make provision for, their inducement to hoard should seem less. That wealth is happiness, is an error which might be pardoned to ignorant youth; but it is one, which, if long experience have not corrected, it must needs be that that experience has been wasted on an undiscerning or a greatly perverted mind; and as far as it is happiness, or the price of happiness, that must be an obtuse

understanding, which, up to the period of age, has failed to discover that that quality is developed, not in its sequestration, but its use; — its use in providing for the occasions of one's self or of others, of the present or the future. To do that self-tormenting work of supererogation; — to fill our minds on such an account with strong solicitudes; to subject our comfort so utterly to the vicissitudes of that world of active men, which we are no longer near enough to watch; to teach ourselves to be incredulous when we listen, and close when we pretend to communicate, and subtle when we act; — what can afford less promise of a tranquil old age? what more inconsistent with its proper dignity? And, (a far more interesting consideration,) what more unsuitable frame for the change which is approaching, than that of a mind occupied, agitated, indurated, fastened to the earth by such cares?

2. Age needs to guard against the disposition to self-indulgence.

I fear, my friends, that no small part of the self-denial, which most of us practise, is forced on us by the power of circumstances. In youth, indolence, and excessive attention to the conveniences of life, are ill tolerated in us by those who have the control of our conduct; and the cares, which, at the next succeeding period, devolve on almost every man, keep him busy, and forbid a weak consideration of his ease. The aged are commonly their own masters, and no one has a right to call them in question for what they do. They have generally the means of indulging their inclinations more at their command than others, and they are no longer in the midst of engagements compelling them to exertion. Add to this, that their infirmities seem to entitle them more than others to consider their convenience and ease, and that, when life has been diligently passed, a season of repose seems to have been fairly earned,

Here is a temptation to them. They are in danger of being led to dispense themselves from active duties, further than their diminished strength requires; and of them it is as true as of any others, that in proportion as they give themselves any such unnecessary dispensation, they remove themselves from their happiness, as well as violate their obligations. Age is in danger of falling in, too much, with the solicitude, which is shown, and ought to be shown, on the part of friends, to save it from all uneasiness, and provide for it all comforts. It is apt to think too much of its claim to such indulgences; to account them more necessary and more due than they are; and so to become indolent, exacting, and selfish. I shall not be misunderstood. I am not denying, that age has a right to expect from youth the utmost consideration and tenderness for its condition, and wishes, and feelings. But that disinterestedness, which is due on the one side, is not to be wholly abandoned on the other. The old are not to think only of themselves, because the young are bound to think much of them; and certain it is, that to see ourselves the object of much attention, extending to all the minor accommodations of life, does tend, unless we guard well against the influence, to make us think ourselves and them of more importance than it is well we should.

The disposition to self-indulgence, which age is thus in danger of contracting, manifests itself sometimes in the morbid tastes of the epicure, and, in rarer instances, in a fond devotion to fashionable follies. In both these cases are recognised the symptoms of an enervated, unemployed, and unfurnished mind. The latter, as most conspicuous to the world, attracts the most remark. The poet's saying, that 'age is unlovely,' is the remotest opposite of truth, when age invests itself with the proper ornaments of its proper sphere. If ever it is most unlovely, it is in that un-

happy self-delusion, when it attempts to mimic the appearance, the manners, and the discourse of youth. Its affectations of this sort give great pain to all judicious observers, and are too apt to be the ridicule of others of less sober mind. A decent gravity is the demeanor which adorns it. This becoming sign of self-respect is indispensable to attract to it the respect which is its due. The amusements, to which age has recourse, we expect to find not of the lightest character. Doubtless it needs, and ought to have, its relaxations. But it seems reasonable to expect them not to be the same, (however otherwise innocent,) which are demanded by the giddy spirits of unbalanced youth; and whatever sympathy, under other circumstances, loud merriment excites, and whatever grace there may be in vain display, neither, in the aged, has any power but to sadden and repel.

3. The aged are subject to a temptation to become opinionative, and dogmatical.

They are right in believing that, other things being equal, when there is a difference of opinion between them and younger persons, the presumption is that the right is on their side. 'I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom,' was a reasonable resolution of Elihu. Experience is one of the surest avenues to truth; and men, in all ages, have reverently listened, as to oracles, to them before whom life in its various aspects had been displayed, and who had had opportunity to gather wisdom themselves from many minds, to test it in many trials, and mature it by long continued thought. The aged feel, that experience has been to them a large source of knowledge. They remember that it has often altered views, to which at some time they had adhered most firmly; and they are quite sure that it will alter views, which now they find others holding. This naturally makes them confident in their

judgments, and tempts them to hold in too undiscriminating a disrespect the judgments of others, who have not had the same advantage. The effect is increased by the deference they are in the habit of receiving. They are accustomed to be applied to for counsel, and they are accustomed to have the expression of their sentiments received as conclusive. In fact, this latter seems to them to be the case, oftener than it is; for those around them, without doubt, are frequently content to appear, for various reasons, more acquiescent than they are, and often the aged think that they have changed another's opinions, or settled his doubts, when they have only escaped a contradiction. The respect, which their opinions command, naturally tends, as has been remarked, to increase their confidence in their judgments; and it is not surprising, if they should thus be sometimes led to adhere to their opinions with an undue pertinacity, and even to enforce them with an ungraceful and impatient positiveness. On all accounts, this deserves their care to avoid. Modesty, and candor, and a disposition to give all sentiments, as well as all persons, their due, — these, though the old are not to be reminded of it by the young, are becoming qualities in all ages. Wisdom is calm, and self-distrustful, and gentle, and considerate; and, knowing the worth of reasons to itself, will not wish to impose its dictates on others on any feebler grounds. Be the opinion in question truth, an authoritative manner will not prove nor even enforce it. We are readiest to attend to the arguments of him, whom we see readiest to attend to ours. Bigoted assertion tends to nothing more surely, than to beget bigoted opposition in another mind. When we see in the aged the gentleness and 'meekness of wisdom,' then we feel a confidence that we may look to them for the soundness of wisdom too. When we see that years have wrought one effect upon them, we are then satisfied that they have

wrought the other. And thus, taking it for granted that age is in the right, a patient and temperate assertion of the right, is what becomes it, and will serve it, best. But, though youth should be ready to allow this, it is not to be absolutely taken for granted by age, that it is in the right. The presumption, as has been said, is on its side, but no more. The advantage of experience is what gives age the better claim to the praise of wisdom. But he is not always most experienced, who is oldest. Experience is not merely given by years; it is to be gathered by care; and, of two men, he will often have the most of its instructions, who has had the least of its discipline. The respective advantages and dispositions for becoming acquainted with a given subject, as well as the length of time that has been passed in the world, are to be taken into view, in determining the probability whether one or another is best acquainted with it. It may even well happen, that the opinion, which claims to be announced on the authority of experience, had been taken up at an early period of life, when its advocate was much less experienced, than he is now, who dissents from it; and had been maintained since, only from habit, and without examination. In such cases, the claim of ampler experience is evidently not to be urged by age. And, in all cases, it is rather one for youth respectfully to acknowledge, than for age arrogantly to assert.

4. It is an old remark, that age is subject to some faults of temper. We hear of querulous old age; of discontented old age; of the gloom, and impatience, and jealousy of age.

The complaint is very likely to be made, where there is no ground for it; and, where there is ground for it, to make it, is, in the domestic circle, a very undutiful act, and a very uncharitable act in any one. But, on the other hand, age is certainly not so privileged above the other periods of life, as not to be compassed with its own peculiar dangers; and

its wisdom and honor lie, not in denying their existence, but in perceiving and guarding against them. When that vigorous health, which of itself is enough for cheerfulness, has departed, and those hitherto nameless infirmities are coming on, which, more developed, will be different forms of the decay of nature; when those great avenues of knowledge, the sight and hearing, are becoming obstructed; when many objects of former interest are disposed of, and many objects of former attachment removed, who has a right to wonder that the serenity of even a good mind should be sometimes clouded, and its even balance shaken? Were it only to lose, as one must in the revolution of years, the place of influence which was held in the busy world; were it only to resign, as younger actors come upon the scene, the tokens of interest to which one has been accustomed; even this, with all else to make amends for it, would be a trial equal to the resources of a strong mind, as well as a christian sense of duty.

But, while there are excuses for the aged for some failures in the exercise of a happy and gentle spirit, they are excuses to be made by others for them, and not for stress to be laid upon by themselves. If the temptation is strong, the greater is the merit of resisting it; and age is as much bound to watch and pray against the sins of an irritable mind, as youth against the sins of levity. We cannot demand of age the exuberant gladness of an earlier period of life; nor could this be proved even to be, in the abstract, the most reasonable or desirable mood of mind. A serious view of things, and a calm satisfaction in them, become it better. But to suffer one's self to be dejected because one is no longer young, is to repine that one has been permitted to live long; that is, has been permitted to enjoy, what the great majority are not, the pleasures of youth and of age besides. To show impatience under the infirmities, which attend on age, is

alike an ill return for the goodness, which has deferred them so long, and an ill omen for the continuance of the sympathy and good offices, which would help us to sustain them. To frown on those innocent enjoyments of the young, which we cannot or do not wish to share, is a most ungracious act. It is unjust to grudge to others in their turn what has been ours; and if we think we have much to bear, a benevolent interest in others' pleasures will go far to help us to bear it. A censorious judgment of the young is unwise as well as unkind. While the aged are doubtless liable to be charged with this fault without reason, they are not to forget habitually to qualify their judgments, by considering that they may be looking at the question with partial eyes, and that what now they condemn, they once, perhaps with better reason, approved; that what was wrong in their earlier years, may now perhaps, in a change of circumstances, have become right; or that, at all events, something, within reasonable limits, is to be indulged to youth, and that what has not approved itself to their judgment, may at the very worst, be almost indifferent, and deserve to be tolerated, if it do not deserve to be chosen. A worse fault is, a suspicion of the affection of friends; a jealousy, that their interest in us is worn out, that we have lived as long as they desire. The suspicion is not likely to be well founded, in relation to any aged person, whose interest in others has been kept alive; for that interest will express itself in a thousand ways, calculated to attach and endear. If it be not well founded, to harbor it is one of the cruelest of wrongs, and one of the surest ways withal to bring about what we dread; for the expression of such a jealousy is offensive and estranging, and its indulgence will cool that cordiality on the one part, which is so needful to maintain affection on the other. And even if it were well founded, still to conceal it, — to stifle it, if possible, — is the way for us to take, if we would avert,

if we would not make the worst of an evil. Nothing more surely defeats its end, than complaints of failure in affection. If we are not beloved, the best way to make ourselves so is to become more amiable, which suspicions, and still more the expression of them, prevent us from becoming. — This jealous spirit has reached its height, when it leads the aged to suspect whoever approaches them of having some artful design to compass. It is then a source of perpetual distress. What may well be dreaded, it gains strength continually, as, retiring further from the scene of action, one is sensible of being more exposed to be imposed on, by whosoever has that design in view; till at length, all confidence in others, and, with it, all the peace of one's own mind, is gone. That is a heavy retribution, which comes on any, who regard others as unfit to be trusted. And a frank, generous spirit, a spirit, which, conscious of honorable purposes and of promptness to kind sentiments, gives others credit for what it finds in itself, this, on the other hand, never fails to share largely in the happiness which it widely imparts.

I hope for some future opportunity to take up the other parts of the subject. Meantime, let the suggestions, which have been made, be respectfully commended to the consideration of the aged. Let those of us, who, before age has come, find any of the faults, that have been enumerated, stealing on us, take a warning to check them while we may, lest in our age they be found fixed and inveterate. And let not a word, which has been said, be so misinterpreted, as to impair in any degree the respect, which under the most solemn obligations we all owe to our elders. I have spoken only of temptations to which the aged are exposed, as the young and the mature are exposed to others, certainly not less dangerous; temptations which, in many bright instan-

ces, are resisted, one may say, with a perfect success. I have spoken of faults, most of which, if, through the infirmity of nature, they are not wholly escaped, deserve to be viewed with a generous allowance; and which, considered as they are to be peculiarly incident to the aged as a class, are of course liable to be imputed to them in individual instances, where they can be imputed with no degree of justice. Age is not sinless nor secure, more than any other period of life. It has its precautions to take for itself, and its accountability to God. But we should be making a most perverse use of a consideration of its spiritual dangers, if we were to suffer ourselves in any degree to lose sight of that dictate of natural conscience and of revealed religion, which bids us 'rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.'

SERMON V.

DUTIES OF THE AGED.

PROVERBS XVI. 31.

THE HOARY HEAD IS A CROWN OF GLORY, IF IT BE FOUND IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In introducing, on the last Lord's day, some remarks on the subject suggested by these words, we observed, that, since the constituent parts of righteousness are purity, benevolence, and devotion, the hoary head, which is called a crown of glory, must of course be that of an innocent, useful, and devout old age. Under each of these divisions, again, it was said, is comprehended a variety of particulars; and in enumerating some of those, which fall under the first, we were led to speak somewhat largely of moral dangers, against which age needs to guard.

II. Active usefulness in old age is a second requisite to invest it with a crown of glory.

1. I am not denying, what has been before allowed, that age is designated by nature for a season of comparative retirement. The infirmities, greater or less, by which, in the common course of things, it is beset, compel it in a manner to withdraw from the busiest scenes, and so secure to it an opportunity to rest and compose itself, after the

struggles, through which it has been passing. But it does not follow from this, that in age, more than at any other period of life, we are to dispense ourselves from duties, which we are in a capacity well to discharge. Long continued inaction is not rest, unprofitableness is not pleasure, as many, who have made the mistake, to their cost have on trial found. No doubt it is reasonable, that, beyond even what our failing strength requires, we should, as age comes on, endeavor to detach ourselves from worldly cares and interests, particularly those of a perplexing and agitating nature, that we may bring freer and calmer minds to contemplations on the state we are approaching. But it is an unsafe experiment for any one, to abandon without necessity all active labors, for the sake of taking his ease, as it is expressed, for the rest of life. Ease is not to be so taken. One may abridge his engagements; and this, for the reasons and with the limitations which have been mentioned, is well. He may change them, and this is better. For instance, he may retire from the mart, or the senate, to the farm. He may give more time, than he has been wont, to labors of neighborly good will, and of public spirit, to the general culture of his mind, to religious studies, and to devotion. But of all plans of life, for young or old, to take one's ease will be found the most uneasy. The mind will wear on itself. The time will be a heavy burden. A hurtful violence will be found to be done to the previous habits of life. And this seems to be the intimation, which Providence gives to the aged, that they, no more than the young, have a right to do nothing. If they can find better occupations than have hitherto engaged them, or occupations more suitable to their years, let them transfer their attention to these. If they need to favor their decaying strength by undertaking less than heretofore of any kind of service, this too let them feel at liberty to do. But what has made the business of their

lives, it is to be presumed, has been something useful; and from this, for others' sake and for their own, they ought not to withdraw themselves, unless so far as physical infirmity demands, or unless, in a greater privacy and quiet, they find something more useful, under all the circumstances, to take the place of what has been relinquished.

2. Age has some important advantages, beyond the other seasons of life, for extensive labors of usefulness, distinct from the tasks of any particular sphere or occupation. Arrived at that period, men have generally, according to their several conditions, more of the means of being benevolent than at any previous term of life. And what is of still greater consequence, they have more time to command for this object. Being less pressed with personal cares, whether those of preparation, as in youth, or of business, as in the period which follows, they have more leisure for others' service. And their experience has taught them, how their more abundant time and means are most effectually to be employed in advancing others' welfare.

3. There are services of a most important class, which age is singularly qualified to render; — to communicate the results of its long observation, in instructions to the young; to impart its practised wisdom in seasonable counsel; to recommend virtue by its revered example. Who can entitle himself to a benefactor's name by more substantial kindnesses than these? Who so competent as the old to render some of them? Who so sure to find the attempt to render them fitly estimated, and cordially seconded on the other part? Let no one venture to call himself useless, as long as he can remember, and judge, and speak, though there should be nothing else that he can do. So long he may be most useful; for so long he can bear a testimony, which from him will be impressive, to the worth of christian goodness, and point out to younger travellers its path of peace.

Nay, so long as, in those days which are called days of labor and sorrow, he is able to show the power of the religion of Jesus, to help him to suffer with serenity, so long he may be doing a service to those around him, more precious than man can estimate. And let none be insensible to the responsibilities, which this age thus imposes on them. With the reverence which attaches to it, its discourse and its example must needs have a vast influence, whether for good or evil. Are the stores of its guilty experience exposed, to clothe vice in new attractions, or teach to less practised cunning, new deceits? The worst work of depravity is then done, while the sinner is drawing nearest to his doom. Is it employed, to the last, in winning souls to truth and heaven, by the rich lessons of its wisdom, and the beautiful attraction of its virtues? There is scarcely an earthly ministry of benevolence so powerful, or so deserving of all hearty gratitude.

4. In the intimate relations of life, age fills a place, which, with the proper dispositions and good judgment, becomes one of distinguished usefulness. Through the domestic ties, it has often authority over young persons, which, disinterestedly and discreetly exercised, is a mighty agent of good. Wisely and generously to exercise it, is a great concern, and deserves to be an object of earnest desire and endeavor. The young should be made to see, if it may be, that their elders, above any narrow views of their own, have really their good at heart; and then, over any ingenuous mind, their influence is immense. Does it belong to the aged to determine the condition, as to worldly fortune, of the young, who are their charge? Here is an opportunity of usefulness, demanding much consideration as to the manner in which it may be best employed. To give them what, in their hands, will be the means of expensive vice, will be doing them one of the worst of injuries; while, on the other

hand, to keep them dependant and straitened, for the purpose of retaining a despotic control over their conduct, will be doing them almost the next worst. For, by preventing them from learning betimes to act on a responsibility of their own, it will incapacitate them to act their part when in the course of nature they become their own masters, and will, too probably, break them down to a timid, servile, and sordid spirit.

These latter considerations, however, are of a class belonging rather to the subject of the duties of parents, of which I may find some other opportunity to speak. I close this part of the subject now before us, with merely suggesting the absolute importance to the aged, (if they would be faithful to the duties to which it relates,) of guarding against such influences, as growing years exert, to deaden their sensibility to others' wants and feelings. Undoubtedly there is danger, that much experience of the deceits of the world will steel the heart; that much endurance of varied trial will make it callous and unsensitive. But if this danger be escaped, if the unabated tenderness of youth be joined to the tried and formed discretion of age, and if life and guidance be given to both by that spirit of the gospel, which is the spirit of power, and of a sound mind, then there is witnessed an eminent example of a benefactor and honor to his associates and to his race.

III. And this brings us to remark, in the third place, on that piety in the aged, which was named as another of the gems that need to be found in its crown of glory.

1. An undevout old age is a most painful spectacle. At any period of life, indeed, the want of a devotional spirit is the most serious want of all, and one, for which nothing can atone. But when we have to lament its absence in the young, we encourage ourselves that growing years, as they correct the volatility of that heedless age, will find a remedy

for the great defect; and when busy life is 'careful and troubled about many things,' to the neglect of what alone is strictly needful, though we cannot defend nor excuse the fault, we still cling to the hope that a time of greater leisure, and of a deeper sense of dependence, will be a time of more reflection. But when age comes and brings no better symptoms, then we begin to despond. Then we begin to be greatly apprehensive that the abused soul is going to cling to its idols to the last. When all the varied discipline of life has yet had no sanctifying efficacy, we tremble as we think on the strong probability that the doom of that soul is sealing. — In the warm, natural feelings of youth, and its lightness of heart, there is something to engage us, even though it be wanting in that first of beauties, the beauty of holiness; and the energy of manhood has a power over the mind, even if a christian spirit do not regulate it, to the degree that it ought. But, wanting that spirit, age wants all. Nothing can compensate the defect. Even though it be chargeable with no open vice, even though it should be praised for generous dispositions, still we miss the appropriate grace of that thoughtful period. We cannot understand how any mind, especially if it appear constitutionally accessible to generous sentiments, can be proof against those emotions, which a long experience of God's mercy should excite, unless it be fortified by depraving principles or inveterate bad habits. We cannot comprehend, how any elements of goodness can there exist, where, when the time of serious thought has come, God is not in all the thoughts. — Wanting trust in God, we are sure that age wants its only competent support. Wanting this, whatever else it may have, we are sure that age must be unhappy. What to an irreligious mind made life attractive in earlier years, is gone; or, which is the same, the relish for it is no longer felt. What is past, has been experienced to be unsatisfactory; to the present, be-

long infirmities and solitude, and the future holds out no happy prospect. Most wretched lot, which man that is born to trouble knows, that of a feeble and lonely old age, which the testimony of a good conscience, and the hopes of the gospel do not cheer!

2. As we look for a pious spirit as the indispensable support and grace of age, so that period of life abounds with peculiar privileges for its culture. Before the view of the aged, life has been presented in a great diversity of aspects; and, in every new aspect, it has presented to their minds, with a new impression, the truth that the Providence of a wise and good being governs in the world, and that to do his will is the one great interest of man, his one sure way to genuine and lasting enjoyment. The retrospect, which they may take, is full of bright revelations to them of the perfections of his character; of the equity and benevolence of his government; of the excellence of his service. They reckon up precious and accumulated tokens of his parental goodness to themselves, kindling a deep, warm gratitude in their hearts. They have learned to number even their griefs among their blessings, explaining and vindicating to them, as the event of after years has often done, what had seemed for the time the darkest ways of Providence. And in such reflections, what was always matter of strong faith to them, has become rather matter of reality and knowledge, — that the Lord is indeed gracious and of tender mercy, and all his ways are righteousness and love.

That composed state of the mind, which it is reasonable to expect will be attained, to an increased extent, when the early ferment of the feelings has subsided, and the agitating cares of the world no longer press, greatly favors the growth of a pervading and vital piety. Age can look on all things with a cool, a just, and wise observation; (and the view of true wisdom is always the view of religion;) and as the

chances of life have perforce inured it to disappointment and restraint in some forms, and the passions and impulses have, by a law of nature, lost much of their headlong force, the work of self-discipline has been made of easier execution, and a subdued and serene temper, akin to the temper of devotion, has been diffused over the soul. Age, again, has more ample leisure for those retired exercises, to which a devotional spirit prompts; and herein it has a privilege, which the pious mind will hold in peculiar estimation. In the more occupied period of earlier life, we could not praise a man, who should withdraw much time, day by day, from the duties of his worldly calling, to be given to the solitary exercises of religious study, meditation, and prayer. He must learn to turn his opportunities of this kind to the best account, because he cannot have them in such abundance as he would wish. The aged have the happiness of not being so restricted. They have more free access to enjoyments of the highest and purest character that can belong to man. They have leisure for investigations in that science of profoundest interest, of which God's word is the expositor. They have tranquil hours, in which they can look into the mysteries, and chide the wanderings, and nourish the good affections, of their own hearts. The world has no longer such demands on them, but that they may often go aside to solitary converse with their best friend; to communion with him, whose friendship has become continually more needful to them, on whose love they know they are soon to be thrown without even the vain appearance of any other resource, and to whose nearer society they have an humble hope then to be received. That age does afford such rich opportunities of this nature, is to be to them a leading occasion of gratitude that they have been brought to see that time; and to profit by those opportunities, to the full extent of their great worth, should be realized by them

to be a chief part of the peculiar responsibility which age imposes.

Do not all our hearts, my friends, respond to the declaration, that the hoary head, thus found in the way of righteousness, is entitled to be called a crown of glory? Among all earthly objects of veneration, what is there, so venerable as the aged saint? With what confidence do we listen to the counsels of his wisdom! With what pleasure do we find ourselves attracting his regard! With what reverence do we contemplate his established virtues! With what admiring satisfaction do we watch the noble bark, which, having outlived so many storms, is sailing calm and stately into the haven of its rest! If we might envy any one, who would it be, if not the aged christian? It was said of old, that none could be safely called happy before his death; but does it not seem enough to say, that no one should be called happy till he has arrived at a religious old age? For such an one, the remnant of life, though it should be compassed with many infirmities, is a period of tranquil and satisfying, because inborn, pleasures. He has no longer oppressive cares to distract him; the objects of his ambition have been attained or abandoned. He has no longer immoderate desires to feed or tame; his mind is a well ordered dwelling of the good affections; its better powers have established their rightful empire, and maintain there a perfect peace. Enemies, he no longer makes nor keeps. He has done with conflict of every kind; and any who may once have wronged him in their thoughts, if they have survived to witness the christian consistency of his life, have learned to understand and estimate him better. The testimony of his conscience to the godly sincerity of the course, which he is finishing, speaks a deep peace, a holy joy, to his spirit. The bliss he is approaching is disclosed with a continually

growing brightness to his view. He goes down the steps of his declining years, upheld and cheered by the tenderest assiduities of those, whom he has caused well to know how they ought to honor and to prize him ; and when, at length, he is gathered to his fathers, like a shock of corn fully ripe for the harvest, the memory he leaves behind is still a blessing and a power, and the painful sense, what a precious boon has been withdrawn, is subdued by the conviction that no unworthy associate has been added to the company of the just made perfect.

May such be the age of any whom I address, whom Providence has spared to see that time! Truly, greatly happy are they, if that wish be accomplished in them. May such an age await others of us, my friends, if he who appointeth man's bounds, should be pleased thus to prolong our days! But to wish for it, is not all that we have to do. Should long life be our lot, we have small reason to hope for a christian and happy old age, if we are not even now industriously engaged in preparation for it. Repentance may come, in old age, to the sinner, and while it brings with it bitter, bitter regrets, bring after it some portion of peace. But we are not now speaking of possibilities. We are speaking of what, according to all reasonable calculation, is to be expected to take place. We are speaking of what is just as much to be depended on, as the truth of the maxim, that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' As to its temporal and its spiritual resources, the condition of age awaits the disposals of earlier life. If we will be prodigals and spendthrifts in youth, we must lay our account with wanting what we have wasted, when age shall come to demand its comforts. If we have dissipated our strength in what we have been pleased softly to term youthful follies, we are not to demand of age to repair the shattered frame, and restore a healthful tone to the wasted

spirits, and the decrepid mind. If we have forfeited our good name, we may look to miss it when we grow old. If we have neglected to inform our minds, their vacancy, when we shall especially need to find rich resources in them, will be a disturbance and a distress. If we have failed to place betimes a curb upon ill-temper, it will grow continually more unmanageable, and the retribution will be, that that, with which we have tormented others, will be a tenfold torment to ourselves. Have we given bad counsel or instruction, or set a bad example, or failed to furnish those of a different character? We shall be liable to suffer largely by the misconduct we have caused. Have we, among our many cares, neglected parental duties? We may chance then to find our children our worst curse, when we shall have urgent need to find them a great blessing. Are we not manifestly chargeable with anything of all this? Still, if we have neglected to cherish with much care the distinctive temper of the disciples of Jesus, the main resource of age will yet be wanting to us, and we shall be made to feel its absence severely. Our recollections then, if conscience be awakened, will give us distressing pain; for the memory of a merely undevout life, (though its deficiencies had gone no further, which, however, is an impossible supposition,) the memory of an undevout life stings an awakened conscience to the quick. The present will then be all dark, and empty, and cheerless to us. God is everything to the good man; supplying all the wants of his spirit, and of his lot. But not to have made him our friend in age, is to be alone, — utterly, miserably alone, — in a waste world. And if this be the aspect of the present and of the past to an irreligious age, what is to be said of the future? Of the future we cannot fail, arrived at that period, to think; however, in gayer years, we may have foolishly put by the thought. We see our decline. The warnings

of nature are successively uttered to us. The growing generations crowd us on to the steep brink of that narrow house, which we must next make our dwelling. What is our condition, what must our feelings be, if the light of immortality, which Jesus carried into its dreary chambers, has not brightened on our view? 'Without hope, and without God in the world.' How just and real, how established in the nature of things, but how awful, is the connexion set forth in those words of the apostle! Without the knowledge of God, there is nothing but despair. To be without a happy hope of what lies beyond the grave, — what a condition for any one! But for one, whose hours of earthly hope are fleeting, as fast as the few remaining sands of a protracted age can fall, how pitiable, how appalling a condition!

My brethren, let us take no such hazards. Let us brave no such woe. Let a true, that is, a seasonable prospective wisdom, be ours. Have we any doubt, what will make us happy in age, and what that is, without which we must unavoidably be wretched, if it should please God that we live to see that time? Have we any doubt, that it is the same acquisition, which if we do not live to see that time, will make a shorter life, and an earlier death, both happy? On all accounts, then, let us be even now intent on that attainment; on securing that better part, which never, in strong or declining years, in life or death, never can be taken from us, nor any of the blessedness it brings. Let us be thoughtful for the future. Every moment brings it nearer; why would we forget it? — Would we by and by have access to stores of happy recollection? We must be now amassing them. Would we be rich by and by in the communications of the divine love? We must, so to speak, be even now conciliating it. Would we, when we are old, have our souls filled and quickened with joyful prospects? The ac-

credited heirs of the promises are the pure in heart, the patient in duty, the trusting in God. My friends, are we omitting anything, which we ought to do? Let the omission be without delay supplied; for, even if age should give opportunity to repair the fault, it will weigh heavily on our spirits, when it comes up before the memory of age. Are we doing anything for God and duty? Let us take heart, and do more and more; for, (persevering and abounding in this service,) we shall be wearing, a few years hence, either the crown of glory, with which a righteous age clothes the erect though humble brow, or else that crown which blessed spirits wear, in their place of rest, in the pomp of their Saviour's triumph, in the more fully manifested presence of their God.

SERMON VI.

DUTIES OF THE AFFLICTED.

I THESSALONIANS IV. 13.

THAT YE SORROW NOT, EVEN AS OTHERS, WHICH HAVE NO HOPE.

THE afflicted are not commonly addressed on the subject of their duties. We find ourselves disposed rather to sympathize with, than to exhort them. Grief is privileged; and we presume not to approach it, except with tenderness and respect. It is already bowed down. If we could, we would relieve it of the burdens which it bears; we would not lay other burdens upon it.

But, my hearers, the thought of duties, which it owes, is not to a good mind a burdensome thought, nor is the recommendation of them felt by such a mind to be an unkindness. A true sympathy dictates a regard to the best good, the religious good, of the objects of its concern; and, as far as it can excite them to a conduct becoming their condition, it is assured that it will at the same time lighten their grief. The afflicted have their duties, and duties demanding only the more to be considered, on account of the allowances which they are tempted to make for them-

selves, and the indulgence with which any weakness of theirs is naturally regarded by others. To a brief suggestion of some of these let our attention now be given. They make a subject, in which none of us, however now circumstanced, can possibly fail, sooner or later, to have a personal concern; and a subject which, whenever that time shall come, we shall find great occasion to wish that we had considered beforehand.

I. The obligation to preserve moderation in sorrow may be first named.

We are not taught that we must not grieve. If it be right to prize the blessings which God gives, it cannot be wrong to be pained when he recalls them. We are not prohibited from a strong grief. Jesus, our master and example, wept. But what is enjoined on us to avoid is, a sorrow such as those indulge, who are without hope; that is, a despairing, an abandoned sorrow. Moderation, indeed, is a somewhat indefinite word. Its requisitions vary with different circumstances, so that what is moderation in one case, would be excess and extravagance in another. But we sufficiently well understand that immoderate feelings are such as exceed the bounds, which, in the given case, reason and sense of duty, in a fair consideration of their dictates, prescribe; and we shall not in practice be often wrong, in deciding where this censure ought to attach. In fact, there will not be presented occasion for nice distinctions in the exercise of that judgment; for the extravagance, which will not keep due limits, will, of its nature, go on to overstep them far and manifestly.

We are evidently depressed to an inordinate degree, if we suffer any minor evils to bring an habitual gloom over our spirits, and distrust over our views of life. There are those, it may be feared, to whom any undesirable occurrence, though itself of no considerable moment, is a sort of

signal for all painful thoughts to throng into the mind. What they have endured, they permit to color their view of every object. What existed just as much before as now, and was just as real an evil, but one which they either saw to be trifling, or had trained themselves to account tolerable, appears, under the new influence, which has been exerted, in quite another aspect. But lately they were contented; but some single cause of dissatisfaction has arisen, and in the altered hue, which, instead of contemplating it and disposing of it alone, they have suffered it to give to their spirits, they have proceeded to call up all painful subjects of reflection, accessible to their imaginations; and their minds are filled with darkness.

This is a very reprehensible, as well as unfortunate habit of mind. Sufficient for the resources, as well as the endurance of the day, is the evil thereof; and to call up other troubles, because there is one, with which we must needs contend, is no act of christian prudence. But our attention is rather due to those, on whom has fallen the blow of some real adversity. Their grief, though such as to move human sympathy and divine compassion, they must allow would be blamable, if it should be indulged without measure and control. To grieve, and to grieve bitterly, according as the occasion is one of distressing trial, is, as has been said, a tribute to nature, on which religion does not frown. But to abandon one's self to grief, to indulge the passion without attempt at restraint, is plainly a course unworthy of a being, whom, in all circumstances, conscience and sense of duty ought to admonish, and trust in God ought to sustain. To concentrate the attention on what has been lost, so as to acknowledge no worth, and take no satisfaction, in blessings which remain; to suffer our impatience to vent itself in murmurs against God, or a sullen or irritable deportment to our associates; to refuse to be comforted, and permit sorrow

to put an end to our usefulness, or prey upon our health or life; — these are intemperate expressions of grief, which a christian cannot approve in another, nor allow in his own practice.

But how is moderation in grief to be maintained? For it is easy to say that we should be resigned; the difficulty is, to acquire that state of feeling. Doubtless it is to be maintained in part by consideration of the criminality of an opposite course, evincing as this does such a want of self-command, and such a want of gratitude for God's continued favors, and of confidence in his parental love. But it must be owned, that the tempest of the feelings is not at once to be stilled, by reflecting merely that we do wrong to suffer it to rage. What we are bound to do, we are equally bound to seek and use the means of doing; and the speediest and most effectual way to recover peace of mind, when the obligation of that endeavor is felt, seems to be, to trace out and contemplate the causes which exist for acquiescence. Accordingly, I know of nothing more characteristic of a christian mourner, than a readiness to see, and rate at their due worth, whatever consolations may be found. Is our affliction such as is common to man, or have we long had merciful notice of its approach? We ought not to magnify it, 'as if some strange thing had happened.' Is the blessing, denied or withdrawn, compensated by other blessings; or had we a protracted enjoyment of it, before we were called to resign it; or are we, after all, more privileged on the whole, than most or than many of our associates? Let us not shut our eyes to this, but own it and be thankful for it. At all events, that we have reason and revelation, and may have a hope of everlasting life, (whatever else we may have, or want, or lose,) is enough, one would think, to forbid us to say that we have no resource for happiness left. Whatever we have possessed, it was God who gave it; and he

remains as able, as he then was, in some way to supply its place, or indemnify us with other bounties, or otherwise reconcile us to our privation. Whatever we may have suffered, he is able, (this is a truth which perplexes our imaginations for the future, but our experience vouches it for the past,) he is able to make it coöperate with all the arrangements of his kind Providence for our good; and if, as we sometimes might seem to desire, the management of our concerns could be transferred from his hands to our own, how plain is it, that we should soon be driven to ask, as the greatest of boons, that he would resume the trust. However we may have been tried, it has not been as he was, who for our sakes 'endured such contradiction of sinners against himself;' and to him we may always look, when we are tempted to be weary and faint in our minds. Such considerations are but a few of the most general ones, to which, in its adversity, the religious mind has recourse, to chasten its tumultuous emotions. Special considerations of a similar tendency belong to each individual visitation of sorrow. If we will be blind to them, we may sorrow without hope. But if, as our duty is, we take pains to search them out and do them justice, our grief may be keen, but it will hardly be indulged beyond all bounds of reason.

II. To have learned to grieve without extravagance, will be a preparation for other duties of the afflicted, of which I proceed, secondly, to name the maintenance of a benevolent interest in others.

It has been often mentioned as a good use of affliction, that it softens the heart; and that tendency it doubtless has, when its action is regulated by a christian spirit. But immoderate grief is in its nature a selfish, an anti-social passion. The mourner, who does not feel that the obligations of a christian are upon him, is tempted to think too much of the immunities of his condition, and, along with

this, to judge very erroneously of its claims. As to the latter, conceiving that excess of grief proves great intensity of affection, he refuses to control his sorrow, lest he should seem to wrong an attachment, which he knows was cordial and devoted. A heathen moralist could reason better than this. 'No evil,' said the eloquent Roman, 'hath happened to my departed friend. Whatever it be, it concerns only myself; and to be severely afflicted at one's own misfortunes, is a proof not of love to our friends, but to ourselves.' And though this mode of arguing certainly does not show, that grief on the like occasion is unreasonable, it does show, that we cannot reasonably indulge it to extravagance, on the ground of any disinterested sentiments which it proves. And if we are assured, that others will be tender, in their blame of us, for any weak and selfish surrender to our griefs, this is the worst of reasons why we should be tender of ourselves. There has much been very mischievously written, in books of poetry and fiction, and elsewhere, going to represent inconsolable sorrow, for ever brooding on its painful recollections, and withdrawn by them from other cares, in an amiable point of view; and the young and sentimental have been often betrayed by that outrageous representation. A christian cannot acknowledge the least justness in it. The immoderate passion of grief, as far as its excess is voluntary, as far as it is to be traced to indulgence, is to be regarded in the same light with other immoderate passions. Its victims are to be pitied, but certainly they are not to be justified, much less to be admired. What is a culpable excess in grief, it may be difficult, or impossible, for any but the individual concerned to know. Men are not formed alike; and an excessive sensibility, constituting a sort of moral impotence in this respect, has seemed sometimes as if it were a part of the original constitution. Also, there may be conceived a complication of

sorrows, which would threaten to enervate the stoutest, and overwhelm the best fortified christian hearts. But, apart from the large and just allowance due to such peculiar causes, he, who should be in the way to die, as it is said, of a broken heart, however others, in their indulgence, may regard him, has scarcely a right to regard himself with more respect, than if he were falling a victim to any other intemperance. An unrestrained passion, — let me call it, for plainness' sake, by a harder name, an ungoverned temper, — is wearing upon his strength. It may be now too late for him to resist its ravages, but so it is in other cases of inordinate self-indulgence, which excite less commiseration. The fault was, in not beginning the work of self-control in season. If, indeed, he struggled with all his might, but ineffectually, he stands acquitted in his conscience, and before his judge. If he did not so struggle, till, through his own fault, it was too late, he has been his own destroyer.

Yes, my hearers, no one has a right, because he has been afflicted, to suppose that he may surrender himself to unprofitable and selfish grief. If this were admissible, and every one who was entitled to the privilege were to claim it, how many do we suppose would remain in the world, who were under obligation to concern themselves for others' happiness? That the afflicted should appeal to others for sympathy, (for I need not repeat that these remarks have application only to cases of wilful perseverance, of self-indulgence in lamentation,) is not only right; it is even benevolent. It is an acceptable mark of their confidence in others' good will. But it is not right, that they should retire within themselves, and, on the ground that they are so disheartened by their calamities, dispense themselves from all interest in others' concerns; and still less is it right, that they should inflict perhaps the worst pang on the hearts of those who share their sorrow, by cherishing bitter regrets,

which they will not permit to be consoled. Some time of solitude is reasonably allowed to the afflicted, to compose their spirits; and there are scenes of ordinary action, from which, if there be no distinct call of duty, they may for a further time be excused for shrinking. But the dispensation, thus created, from the duties of one's place in life, is one of no long duration. It should rather be the aim, to go back to them as soon as the needful strength can be recovered; and the afflicted disciple of that man of sorrows, whose sorrows never withheld him from the work of doing good, will be impatient to give abundant proof, that, in being made to feel for himself, he has been led to feel more sensibly for others. Even to the earliest period of his recovered self-command, there is a favorite ministry of benevolence peculiarly appropriate; for the afflicted are the best consolers of affliction. Their communion, if it be in other respects what it may be, is worth more to a mourner than that of the best of other friends.

III. A third counsel belonging to our subject is given by the wise man, where he says, 'in the day of adversity, consider.'

The day of adversity is a time especially favorable to that serious reflection, which to all may be so useful, and of which many stand so much in need. Gay views of life are hasty and superficial; and such are the views, to which, in a course of uninterrupted prosperity, the mind is liable to be confined. It is apt then to be giddy, and so to look at nothing steadily; to be hurried from object to object, and so to look at nothing long; to be confident in its judgments, so as to give them no fair opportunity to be right; to be flattered, which is but another name for being deluded. The view of seriousness and humility, (states of mind which affliction favors,) is likeliest to be the view of truth; and if adversity too has its occasions of false judgment, and a de-

pressed mind, no less than an elate one, may discern objects through a distorting medium, still we shall be the better assured of a true result, for comparing observations made from different points of view. The reflections of adversity certainly tend to reduce many things to their true proportions, which may have figured before us with a magnified importance. They do strip 'the worshipped pageantry of pride' of much of its attraction. They do show us, that there is something we need more than the gratifications of the passing hour, and something beyond what wealth can purchase. They do expose the pretensions of everything external to the soul, to confer a trustworthy happiness; and display the worth of the treasures which are lodged within the soul.

The thought of our sins, in prosperity, is apt to be a transient and unaffecting thought. In the gladness and inconsiderateness of our hearts, they cost us little apprehension and little regret. In the subdued hour of adversity, the consideration of them comes to us with solemnity and power. Our feelings already harmonizing with the sentiments which they ought to prompt, they are seen in their reality; they make their inexcusableness and their danger known. Our obligations too then present themselves in an impressive form. We find ourselves thrown on our own resources for peace of mind. We are made to feel, that an approving conscience, and, what naturally attends it, a tranquil trust in God and hope of his approbation, are what we have cause most to covet or to prize, as the case may be; and the holy life which wins them reveals itself to us for what it is, — the one thing demanding our diligent and earnest pursuit.

But the consideration most directly pressed on the afflicted, by the state to which they have been brought, is, of what use does it admit for the furtherance of their spiritual

interests. I do not say, for what purpose has it been ordained to them; for this is a question which they cannot expect completely to resolve, though, if they use it well, one purpose, for which it will then appear to have been sent, is, to make them better men. The proper subject of concern in any posture of circumstances, is, not that it has occurred; (that it has occurred, is now a determined and unalterable thing;) but, how to make the best of those circumstances; what use to fix on, to be made of things as they stand. The afflicted are to consider, what temper of mind their condition demands of them to manifest; what virtues it gives them facilities for cultivating, and how its aid may be secured for that use; how they may so demean themselves in their trial, as to please God, and to serve the cause of the religion of Jesus, as others in time past have done, of whose example of patient endurance of calamity they are themselves now experiencing the benefit. Revolving such considerations, and carrying their lessons into practice, how many have afterwards found occasion to say, that affliction was a genuine and distinguished blessing to them. The best characters we have known are such as have been formed under its discipline. There are examples of an excellence, which, without training of this nature in some form, does not seem capable of being attained. An old philosopher said, of a voyage in which he suffered shipwreck, and lost his earthly all, that it was the most successful voyage he ever made, for it led him to renounce other pursuits for the pursuit of wisdom and virtue. How many christians are there who trace acquisitions, which now incomparably above all others they prize, to considerations suggested, resolutions formed, feelings chastened, under circumstances which, at the time, they regarded only as the most distressingly disastrous.

IV. Once more; 'is any afflicted, let him pray.' 'He

is a miserable man,' says one, 'who is afflicted, and cannot or will not pray.'

Let the afflicted pray, because he much needs what the world cannot give him, and what God, whom he addresses, is able and ready to give. Let him pray, because the very act of prayer will tranquillize his spirit, and raise it above passionate sorrow, and inspire it with new hope. Let the afflicted pray, because prayer is the natural language of confidence in the best of friends, and that confidence will grow and brighten while it is expressed. When we draw nigh to God to ask comfort of him, and strength to sustain the day of his visitation, it cannot be but that every feeling, as if he had wronged us, as if he had dealt hardly with us, in the trial we endure, will be banished from our minds. Let the afflicted pray, because, in that season, when the mind, in its desolation, has recourse to the power which alone can give it support, and to the love that knows no limit, prayer has a peculiar fervor, is a peculiarly deep and earnest breathing of the affections; the worth of the privilege of prayer is more than ever revealed, and the pleasures of devotion are permanently endeared to the soul. Let the afflicted pray, because, as has been seen, their situation imposes on them duties; duties, through which they may advance their own spiritual interests, please God, profit others, and serve the cause of Christ; and to acquit themselves well of these, they need guidance and strength from above, whence prayer will bring strength and guidance down. Let the afflicted pray, finally, because the great example of sufferers, Jesus, prayed. And let them endeavor to pray with some portion of his spirit. Submission is the christian's divine peace which passeth understanding; and if the prayer which breathes it do not bring down, as it did to the Saviour, a strengthening angel, it will itself do an angel's office to the stricken heart.

SERMON VII.

DUTIES OF THE SICK.

PSALM XLI. 3.

THE LORD WILL STRENGTHEN HIM UPON THE BED OF LANGUISHING; THOU WILT MAKE ALL HIS BED IN HIS SICKNESS.

THE subject, which I propose for your consideration at this time, my hearers, — the duties of the sick, — may at first sight appear inappropriate to those, who, being able to be present here to meditate on those duties, must be supposed to be not in that condition to which they belong. But sickness is a condition, to which, in the common course of Providence, we all must expect to come sooner or later, and to which we are never secure against being immediately brought. Undoubtedly it behooves us to be acquainted with duties, which we may at any time, and in all probability must, at some time, be summoned to practise. And the urgency of this case is even peculiar. In other cases we act under a disadvantage sufficiently great, if we have still to learn what our course ought to be, when the time for taking that course has come, and all our energies are demanded for its actual prosecution. But here, that application of the mind, by which past negligences of this nature

might be partially made up, cannot be reckoned on to be at our command. Sickness sometimes overthrows the mind, and is almost sure, more or less, to discompose it. In its hours of lassitude, and giddiness, and pain, whatever direct attention can be given to anything, is of necessity much occupied with physical infirmities and cares; and, at best, a more or less diseased state of the spirits must be expected to accompany physical disease, in which the soundest investigation of the principles of action, if that investigation be then for the first time taken up, is little to be looked for. It is a temerity not very different from desperation, to put off inquiry into the demands of such a condition, till we find ourselves already in it, and accordingly, by the necessity of the case, perhaps wholly, certainly in some degree, incapacitated for that inquiry.

Under the description of duties of the sick, some are to be classed, for which sickness provides, strictly speaking, the occasion. Patience is one of these. Sickness is afflictive, and accordingly furnishes a sphere for the power of bearing affliction well. Others, of which several will be mentioned, not only ought to be, but on all accounts would more satisfactorily and completely be performed in health. They are named among duties of sickness, because, if slighted before, there is created a necessity, the more pressing and imminent, for their receiving attention then. It will be sufficient to have guarded against misapprehension, by merely making this remark. I proceed, as was proposed, to specify some of the duties of those visited, in God's Providence, with sickness.

I. The first duty, if most unhappily it still remain to be done, is to establish their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is indeed a case pitiable beyond description, when one, who has received this warning that God designs to call him soon away, who sees cause perhaps to believe that only

a few distracted hours remain to him of earthly life, is without that faith, which is then the only anchor of the soul; knows not that Jesus has brought life and immortality to light; is not convinced, that God has sent through him to the penitent and faithful a message of pardon and peace. It is a desolation of the mind, which one shudders to contemplate, when, in its time of trial and fear, it does not know that there is a Saviour, in whose love it may find refuge. And the reasonable dread of the wretchedness of such a state may well incline us, while the leisure of health permits, to acquire, as we may, that fixed and enlightened persuasion of the divine authority of the gospel, which may enable us, in the season of our urgent need, to rest, with entire assurance, on its disclosures of grace and truth.

If sickness come on any, by whom this has failed to be done, it is impossible not to commiserate their condition, and tremble for their fate. But still the precious faith they have slighted never teaches the lesson of despair. Still, of them who seek it, it offers to be found. Let them consider, if christianity be from God, how much it imports them to know it. Let them own, what certainly there is no denying, that the assent of so many of the wise and good to its claims, is at least a presumption that it is what it professes to be. Let them ask themselves, whether some attention is not deserved by a system, which, its enemies themselves being judges, breathes so generous and divine a spirit. And having advanced thus far, they will see reason, if they are able, to examine the scriptures, to which God has given the power to recommend themselves. They may be expected, under this new motive, to be inspired with a curiosity to investigate, as far as their infirmities permit, the evidences of that faith, which cannot but appear to their own minds to be worthy, if true, of all acceptation. Or, if not in a condition to prosecute an inquiry so interesting in any other

way, they will seek the aid of some well-instructed christian friend, who will undertake the good work of imparting to them the knowledge they need, and solving the questions that perplex them. It may be, that, before their change comes, the truth may thus be made to shine into their minds, and themselves, by its sanctifying efficacy, be converted and saved.

II. But this, which is undoubtedly the most unmanageable case of all, it is to be hoped, is also one of the most infrequent. For a second duty of the sick, I name that of self-examination.

Doubtless, my hearers, we have none of us, either in sickness or health, any security for continued life. It is the constant agency of God, and nothing else, which sustains us in being from one moment to another, and that may cease in any moment, for the healthy as well as the infirm. But it is nevertheless true, that sickness is a warning to us of mortality; that, according to our reasonable calculations of probability, sickness, in proportion as it is severe, increases the probability of our being summoned soon away. Hence arises an urgent necessity for forming an acquaintance with ourselves. What it was always foolish and hazardous to delay, can now with no safety be delayed any longer. We may be sensible that the inquiry will lead to painful developments. That will not dispense us. It is through our previous fault, if it do; we have none to blame for it but ourselves; and that which is our condemnation we may not convert into our excuse. And again, bad as the case may be, it is only the worse for our not knowing it. An unawakened conscience is the most of all things to be dreaded; and, when the conscience has been awakened, the only way to recover peace of mind is to resolve to turn from one's sins, which cannot be done till they are investigated and known. On the other hand, let them, whose consciences may testify favorably of their past lives, examine them-

selves, that they may have all the comfort of this testimony. In their long days of distress, and nights of weariness, they will experience it to be the most efficacious of anodynes. Let the sick be admonished to employ, as best they may, the time which perforce is sequestered from other employments, in a careful inspection of themselves. Have they hitherto used life ill? On the repentance, for which such a scrutiny is the foundation, rests their only hope of being saved. Have they used it well? That inquiry will show them, how, if spared, they may use it better, and will afford them meanwhile, the most availing consolations.

Let me but add, that the aim should be to conduct the self-examination, which is here recommended, in a spirit of justice, removed alike from self-indulgence, on the one hand, and from undue severity on the other. That we should be strict enough with ourselves, is essential to our coming to a knowledge of the truth, in a case where self-deception is self-abandonment; and, on the other hand, we are to be on our guard against unreasonable scruples, which only the low spirits of sickness may suggest, and which might tempt us to despair, or divest us of our energy, at the time when we have most need of it all. In this, as in other cases, we are to endeavor to exercise a sound and manly, which is the only trustworthy judgment; presenting distinctly to our minds the requisitions of the gospel, as best we understand them, on the one hand, and, on the other, our own actual practice, and comparing these together with a sincere desire to come, not at a flattering representation, but at the truth.

III. What I am to name as a third duty of the sick, has been already implied; that of repentance of past sins.

Repentance of them is the ground, on which we are taught in the gospel to look for their remission; and it is to be regarded as a gracious disposition of things, that, in the common course of Providence, sickness, which affords an

opportunity to complete that repentance, is appointed to be the precursor of dissolution. I say, to complete that repentance; for from the repentance begun in fatal sickness, under the most favorable circumstances, nothing can be confidently hoped. It is scarcely possible for the convicted sinner himself, still less for his friends, to distinguish between the anguish of fear, and the anguish of contrition, between aversion to impending punishment, and aversion to remembered guilt; and even if a real compunction for sin, and abhorrence of it on account of its odious character, could be known to be felt, that feeling is no further of the nature of an availing repentance than as it would, if life were prolonged, secure the individual against relapsing into his former errors. You say that God, to whom all hearts are known, may see that the self-condemnation of a dying man is of this deep and pervading nature, and would, if time were allowed to prove it, prove itself to be of this reforming efficacy. And this I do not dispute. God may see it. But man can never see it to be so; and man, moreover, can have no sufficient reason to believe that God, in any given case of the kind, sees it to be so. For, first, we might argue on the little probability that, in the confused and timid hour of sickness, when the pains of the present and the terrors of the future distract his mind from connected and vigorous thought, he, who in unbroken health had been proof against all the sanctifying influences of the gospel, should so experience them, as, in restored health, always to manifest their power. And, secondly, the argument would be fortified by our too constant experience of persons, who, brought to the gates of the grave, have given as unequivocal tokens of penitence as any sick bed can show, but who, by an impulse, which seemed almost a sort of instinct, have been seen to go back to their old vices, as soon as they had strength enough to go back to their old haunts, employments, and associates.

Am I contradicting the assertion, then, with which I began, that sickness is a time for repentance? By no means. I am saying that, under the best circumstances, it is far from being the most favorable time, for one whose life has been spent in wilful sin. For such a one, I should rely unspeakably more on a repentance in health than a repentance in sickness, because the origin of that feeling, which has come upon him, is then likelier to be pure, partaking less of craven alarm, and more of sense of duty; because his mind is capable of a better action and truer impressions; and because there seems to be time before him, not to prove, which is not the main thing, but to fix and mature his better principles; in short, to make them truly his, by trial, and conflict, and use. But here is not the question. The decision in the case supposed, is not between health and sickness, as the better time for repentance, but between the time of sickness and none. Let the sinner, whom sickness has assailed, use that time to repent, for his immortal hopes now depend on his so using some time, and probably he may be allowed no other. His prospect is a dark one, but it is not total night. It is within the reach of possibility, that he may yet exercise a repentance, which, though man cannot, God may see to be thorough, and such as, if life were spared, an exemplary christian life would ratify; and to that possibility, frail trust though it be, he is mad if he does not cling. And for him who is brought to the close of a well-spent life, (imperfect as he will still be, however devoted,) it may well be accounted a privilege to lay it down at the summons of some disease, which permits him deliberately to make his last earthly reckoning with himself and with his Judge, and to manifest that contrition for his remaining delinquencies, which, whenever he has expressed it in time passed, the improved tenor of his life has uniformly evinced to be sincere.

IV. The fourth remark, which I am to offer, has again been in substance anticipated. Repentance essentially respects the future, as well as the past. It is nothing, if it do not involve a hearty preference of all goodness before all sin, and inspire a hearty resolution of universal amendment. It is genuine, when it causes us to feel a profound interest in becoming as good christians as we can; in knowing all our obligations, that we may discharge, all our dangers that we may shun them; in keeping our hearts pure from every touch of spiritual defilement; in being useful to our fellow-men, according to the largest measure of our means; in serving God our Maker devotedly, with our bodies and our spirits which are his.

A due interest of this kind will prompt us to practise some forethought. It will dictate to us to lay out definite plans, for our future years, (should they be prolonged,) having reference to the occupations, associates, and temptations, among which we must expect to pass them; plans by which the good general resolutions we have conceived may be carried into effect. For resolutions of obedience in general, in general come to nothing. If we really feel an interest in them, if we really wish them to succeed, we must have careful respect to the means, to the labors, through which, by ourselves, in our circumstances, this event is to be brought to pass. And, independently of this consideration, sickness, if it is not to prove fatal, which we cannot certainly know that it will, is a pause, which Providence creates for us on the journey of life. It is then a dividing period, where we are forced to stop and reflect, between the past, from which experience is to be gathered, and the future, to which it may yet be applied. We are greatly self-negligent, if we do not so use it, that, if permitted to proceed again on our way, our way for the future may be in all respects more prosperous. There is much stored in

our memories for our minds to act on. There is nothing from which we may not extract useful lessons; and when the intervals of pain permit, the retirement of sickness favors such contemplations. He must be a hopelessly unwise man, who departs from a sick chamber no wiser than he entered it. And among those plans for the future, some of which nothing but stupidity can prevent from being devised, plans of religious duty, with a religious man and with a genuine penitent, will hold the first place. Is he then spared to fulfil them? Evidently it is a great happiness to him that they have been formed. Is he not so spared? Still it is a great happiness to have formed them, for his preparation for his departure has been so much the better made.

V. But repentance has respect to the present, as well as to the future and the past. There is no reality in that sorrow, which does not immediately amend what is regretted. There is only falsehood in those resolutions, which we do not forthwith begin to execute. Whatever in truth displeases us, we shall abandon, not at some future day, but now. Whatever we honestly prefer, we shall do, not determine to do hereafter. Accordingly, what we are to name, as a fifth duty of the sick, is, the present practice of piety.

We are apt, I know, my friends, to speak of sickness as withdrawing a man from his duties. But this is in a very lax use of language. In important respects, it would be hard to name a place of more responsible service than a sick chamber; a place where christian principle is better tried, or a more heroic spirit may shine forth. The christian, in his most painful sickness, if the soundness of his mind be but spared to him, is daily growing in grace, and in the experimental knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. He is daily collecting richer trophies of that victory of faith, which overcomes the world. The distinctive forms, in

which the spirit that animates him is to be manifested, relate to his condition, as a condition of suffering. This helps him the better to testify, and the more to enjoy, his deep seated confidence in God. An afflictive hand is heavy upon him, but no murmur moves his lips, for he knows that it is a father's hand; a father's, who he is sure is regarding him all the while with deeper tenderness, than can be ascribed to any of the friends, whose tried love is ministering to him with such gentle and unwearied assiduities. The suffering, which puts to such a proof his spirit of submission, confirms, and purifies, and exalts it. When other help is ineffectual, he learns to repose with a more undivided trust on his Almighty helper; he learns to set an added value on the consolations, with which his unseen, but ever present benefactor visits his soul. With that benefactor he habitually communes in prayer, alone, and asking, as he has been taught, the intercessions of his brethren. Great blessing as it is, which has been taken from him, still he feels the obligation and the happiness of a thankful spirit to be such, that he will by no means permit it to desert him in consequence of that loss. So far from repining, that health has at length been taken away, he owns himself to be reminded of the acknowledgments which he owes, that, amidst so many exposures, it had been so long preserved. So far from parading and boasting of his patience, as if it were some extraordinary calamity that had fallen on him, and it was owing to an extraordinary virtue, that he did not complain, he takes pleasure in justifying the ways of God, and extolling the goodness and mercy which have hitherto followed him through all his days. He will extend his view to the various alleviations of his trial; and no one of the blessings which surround him, from the largest to the least, will be lost upon his grateful observation. The many comforts which he may command, the skill and the care,

which minister to his weakness, the intervals of ease, even the restricted measures of distress, will seem so many calls to him to rejoice in the Lord; nor will he see even cause to allow that the greatest of earthly blessings has been withdrawn, while he experiences, within and without him, so many tokens of his heavenly father's love. Nor to his heavenly friend alone is the gratitude of his placid spirit confined. So far from giving way to the discomposure and discontents, which a suffering frame stimulates in an unregulated mind, and complaining that that is not done, which no human skill can do, or imputing to want of feeling what is only want of power, the least kindnesses are received by him in a way, which tells that, if he were able, he would be ready to requite them with the greatest. There is an expression in the low voice, in the feeble look of his gratitude, which is itself rich requital to a heart of sensibility; which makes it seem like a great privilege to serve him; and, while he is prone to account himself most useless, shows how competent he is to the great and useful service of awakening affectionate and admiring emotions in other minds, and winning them to that religion which invests him with such a power.

My friends, it would be useless to attempt to urge the truth, that that condition to which these remarks have referred, (a condition to which we are in hourly danger of being brought,) is one that will call for all our resources, one that will bring our principles to the strictest test. If we never before longed for the testimony of an unburdened conscience, we shall greedily crave it in that fainting hour. If we never before felt the need of divine supports, unquestionably we shall feel it then. For that need, it is but the commonest prudence to be now providing. May the spirit be every day maturing in our hearts, through

which God may strengthen us in our hours of languishing, may soften the restless bed of our sickness. May the determined resolution even now be ours, so to use this uncertain time of health, that sickness, when it shall come, may bring no alarm, but only show, through its gloom, in contrasted brightness, that light of devotion, which, illuminating our own souls, shall glorify our heavenly father, and invite those, whom we love, to approach the narrow valley, when their time shall come, by the same path of peace.

SERMON VIII.

DUTIES OF THE SICK.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 1.

THUS SAITH THE LORD; SET THINE HOUSE IN ORDER, FOR THOU SHALT DIE, AND NOT LIVE.

THESE words make the message, with which we are told that the prophet Isaiah was sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah, in those days when he was sick unto death. Sickness, in any serious form, indeed we may say in any form, is always to be interpreted as a notice of mortality; and whomsoever it assails, he will do well to understand and reflect, that the Lord may be saying to him in that visitation of his providence, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.

I lately discoursed on duties of the sick, explaining myself to mean, under this denomination, to include duties, for which sickness provides (strictly speaking) the occasion, and duties, for the discharge of which there arises in sickness a necessity the more pressing and imminent, if they have been slighted before, though they ought to have been, and would have more satisfactorily and completely been, performed in health. The duties, on which I then enlarged, were such as belong peculiarly to our relation to our Maker;

peculiarly, I say, for in a very proper sense duties of every kind belong to that relation. Others, appropriate to the condition in question, I purposely reserved to be considered at another time; and these I propose for the subject of our present meditations.

The duties I have now in view, are such as belong to our relation to our fellow-men, from whom we have in sickness received a warning that we are about to be separated. We are soon to be taken from this world; at least we very probably may be so. The house, from which we are removing, is to be left in order. There are those here, who have claims upon us. There are those here, whom we are able to serve, but whom we shall soon be able to serve no longer. We must do our duty by them now, or we shall never do it. What are the duties of the sick towards their fellow-men?

I. I name, for one of these, the obligation to make a right disposition of our temporal affairs, if this have not, (as it should however, as far as possible,) been earlier made.

And since the connexion brings the subject in our way, let me stop to suggest, that that seasonable direction of the distribution to be made of one's estate at one's death, which is apt to be regarded as a matter of discretion merely, is in truth a point of serious obligation. There is one case, where there is a dispensation from the duty. If a man, after having examined the provisions of the law for the distribution of the property of intestate persons, is deliberately persuaded, that the distribution, which it will make of what he may leave, is precisely that which he would feel it his duty to make; that it would exactly fulfil his obbligations of justice and charity; (that is, if his heirs at law are the only persons whom he ought to consider, and if the distribution which it will make among them is that which in their case is the most just;) in that posture of things he has nothing more

to do, than to prepare such a statement of his effects as may save those who shall have the charge of them from inconvenience and disputes, and then leave the law to take its course with them. But the case supposed is probably one of very rare occurrence. The law, which can act only through general rules, proposes to make the best arrangement, which general rules can make, to remedy omissions of individual negligence. But the obligations of individuals in this case are endlessly diversified, and such moreover as only the individual can perfectly know; so that the law cannot undertake to investigate and enforce them. It leaves the individual to consider them for himself; and the disposition, which, having considered them, he sees fit in solemn form to make, (giving satisfaction thereby, what his purpose was, and that he was in a capacity to form it wisely,) that disposition, provided it do not encroach on certain rights, which the law protects, the law lends its authority to carry into effect. So that the obligation to make an equitable distribution of his property rests directly on every individual, who has property to distribute. Be it ever so little, the obligation is the same. When it is little, there is often the greater necessity that it be rightly appropriated; and he who is best acquainted with it, and has been used to the care of it, can best direct how it may be made productive and useful.

As to the manner of such a disposition, it would be unsuitable here to say more, than that this is to be regulated by an impartial sense of the obligations of justice and charity. Reasonable expectations, founded on domestic ties, or voluntarily excited, are to be well considered; resentment and partiality, merely as such, are not to be listened to, though there may be well-founded dissatisfactions and preferences which should have a voice; precautions may demand to be taken for the incompetent and the

imprudent; and they who can do more than make suitable provision for dependents, nearer and more remote, may well indulge themselves in acknowledgments of friendship, and, seeing themselves to be addressed by a strong claim in behalf of the great interests of society, may well reflect what they may judiciously do, when departed, as well as while here, for the promotion of human welfare, physical, intellectual, social, and religious. The making of a will, which is no less than undertaking to acquit one's self finally of all one's obligations, whether more or less definite, as far as these relate to property which one possesses, must needs be regarded as a very serious undertaking by a conscientious man. And, therefore, it should receive attention in health, when there is time for consideration and arrangement, when the judgment and the memory are clear, and such advice as one may desire is easily accessible.

Thus will so much be taken away from the cares of sickness, when other cares will severely press. But should this work still remain undone, one of the first objects of the attention of the sick should be, to take from all men just cause for saying, after his departure, that they have been wronged by him. Whatever informal engagements he is under, he should take care to disclose, and so to arrange that others may not eventually lose their just advantage from them. Is he able to charge himself with any past pecuniary injustice, which is still capable of a remedy? Let him set himself forthwith to devise and apply that remedy. It is shameful that there should still be occasion for it, but not nearly so shameful, as that, through shame, it should be longer withheld. To leave a known wrong unredressed when we die, if we are capable of redressing it, may be called, without a strong figure, continuing to sin in our graves. And having satisfied these most peremptory demands of justice, the sick person is then, as has been said,

to appropriate, what may remain subject to his voluntary disposal, in the manner which a good discretion and good feelings may dictate, which may prevent just disappointment, burdensome expenses, and especially disputes, and do the good which is reasonably looked for at his hands. I scruple not to say, that he who has made no disposition of his estate, while he knows that the law would not make provision with it for those for whom he is bound to provide, must, whenever he thinks of this in health, have a very uneasy conscience, if he have not, what is worse, a very callous one; and whoever should have to think of this when it was too late for the evil to be remedied, whatever hope he might indulge that God would allow for his compunction for what he could no longer prevent, could not be wondered at, if his last moments were disturbed with a very fearful looking for of judgment.

II. I specify, as a second duty of the sick towards their fellow-men, the exercise of a meek and forgiving spirit.

It is a sad and a wicked thing, to cherish hostility towards another in the proudest days of health. We should never bring our tribute of devotion to the altar, without having first forgiven, if we have aught against any. We should never lie down to rest, beneath the protection of a forgiving God, with malice festering in our hearts. This, however, is done, and from its commonness fails to move our wonder. But to be brought to the low estate of sickness; to be forced, one would suppose, to feel how little a thing is our resentment and our pride; to be warned how complete our own dependence is on mercy; to hear a summons, which we may soon have to follow beyond the power of offering another welcome to relenting thoughts, — and yet to harbor the evil spirit of vindictiveness within us, — evinces a great inveteracy of the malignant passions. The sick man, no more than the well, is bound to restore to his esteem, nor

even to his familiarity, them who may have forfeited the one, and made the other, for sufficient causes, undesirable. But he is bound, if in health he has been so unhappy as to bear malice, to discard it now, and go to his grave forgiving, as he hopes to be forgiven. And, in doing this, he is bound to understand, that, as to what may remain, he is no longer to take counsel of the resentment which he renounces, but, (as far as other circumstances in the case recommend or justify,) to apprize the offending person, and apprize others, of his restored good-will, and add all proper tokens of it. On the other hand, has he been the wrong doer, and has he hitherto persisted in the wrong? Let him be assured that no pretended repentance towards God will be available, if, with his eyes opened to its character, he do not forthwith all that is in his power to atone for it. Unless substantial reasons, well weighed and approved in the court of conscience, forbid, let him confess his fault to him whom he has injured, and solicit his forgiveness; convince him of his own return to a better mind; and regain, if possible, his esteem and good will. If it be the good name of another, against which he has trespassed, let him spare no pains, nor any sacrifice of personal feeling, to make his recantation as public as his offence. If it be any wrong which is capable of being repaired or requited, let this be scrupulously done. To remove from our fainting spirits the thought that any one, when we are gone, will have just cause to reproach our memory, were this all, is worth whatever it may cost. If he who was wronged, does not know that we have wronged him, this does not alter our duty. We should set the injury right with others, or even be informers against ourselves, as the case may be. And if there has been blame upon us which we did not deserve, if it was misunderstanding which caused enmity, we should not be too proud to be willing to rectify it, in that serious hour, when our words, perhaps be-

fore discredited, will be taken for the words of truth. Such a pride in our innocence would perchance not leave us innocent. We should have such regard for the esteem of others, as to think it, not a demeaning of ourselves, but our true honor, to be at pains to disabuse them of their prejudices. In their mistaken resentment, have they greatly injured us? They have the worst; and, in the nobleness of our innocence, we can bear to make allowance for them. This is no humbling, it is rather honoring ourselves. Rash and pertinacious as they may have been, it is better for us, and much better for them, that they should be undeceived late than never. We shall die somewhat the more tranquilly, for knowing that justice at last is done, and friendship won back to us; and it is a good service to close our days with, to dispossess a brother's mind of such undesirable guests as are the angry passions.

III. Sickness invests us with a peculiar power to promote the best, that is, the religious welfare of those who may be around us; and we should be careful to profit by the opportunity. Whatever we then say, we may trust will be received as expressive of our real convictions, for the time when death seems approaching is certainly the time, if ever, when a man may be expected to be sincere; and we may be sure, that, if there are any who value us, our last words will not fail to make some impression on their minds. Or at the worst, if little heed seems now to be given them, we may promise ourselves that the time will come, when they will be recalled with better feelings.

The opportunity is not to be suffered to pass without full improvement. Have our lives been prevailingly lives of christian duty? We should be careful to bear express testimony to the excellence of the principles, by which we have endeavored to be guided; to declare that whatever others have found in us to approve is to be traced to that source;

and to urge, on the authority of our own experience, the great happiness of a christian life. Has a different course unhappily been ours? We are to give others too the benefit of our errors, and warn them against the practices which have been our shame, and the temptations which have been our snare. Have we marked praiseworthy qualities in any, who are about us? We should assure them of our approbation, and encourage them to perseverance in the course, which has won it. Have we seen them to be in any respect in danger? We are to acquaint them with our apprehensions, and entreat them to be watchful. In short, with a truly benevolent view to the promotion of their best interests, when we shall be no longer here to advise them, with a truly anxious desire to use well the last opportunity we are to have for their service, we shall consider what their circumstances are, and are likely to be; the excitements, to which they may be accessible, and the seductions, to which they may be exposed; and shall earnestly endeavor to adapt to these the counsels, which we address to them. A dying man will be listened to, and therefore he should feel constrained to speak. He may be candid without offence, and therefore he should speak as freely and fully as his strength permits. And particularly is it a duty, as long as we live, to continue to recommend our religion, by our example, to a reception in other minds. Every one understands that sickness is a severe trial of the resources of a christian; and nothing impresses observers more with a sense of the worth of the faith which he professes, than to see it enabling him to submit, without complaint, to pain, to the loss of his powers of action, to the interruption of favorite pursuits, and to the prospect of premature separation from them who are dear to him, and for whose condition, when he shall be taken from them, he might be pardoned for being anxious. However unnoticed before, in sickness a man is

watched, and accordingly his example is of greater consequence. Apart from the peculiar interest, which near friends, if he have them, will take in his state of mind, leading them to love whatever supports him, and be pained by whatever is adverse to his tranquillity, his impatience will not be overlooked under any circumstances, because it creates disturbance, and his spirit of resignation, if he have it, can scarcely fail to attract notice and praise. So that in sickness men are to consider themselves as furnished with peculiar facilities, and accordingly lying under a peculiar obligation, to advance the spiritual well-being of whoever may hear their voice, or witness their deportment. They are to present this to themselves as a distinct object of endeavor; and if they have the success, which they may hope, it may prove hereafter that the chamber of their mortal sickness was the scene of the greatest benefits they ever have conferred.

IV. Once more; to the sick belongs the office of consolation.

Is there any work, my friends, more dear to the heart of benevolence, than that of soothing the sorrows of the bereaved? When he who knows that his time of departure is at hand, thinks of the grief, which it must cost to those who will resign him, is there any wish, which he more feelingly indulges, any prayer, which he more fervently addresses to the throne of grace, than that their desolate spirits may find support and comfort in that hour? The fulfilment of that wish, it rests much with himself to ensure. Here, let it be well remembered, is a great power given to them, whom sickness is summoning away, over the peace of surviving friends; and by every feeling of tenderness for those, for whom they ought tenderly to feel, let them be conjured not to misuse it. A little time hence, the evidence, which they are now giving, whatever it be, of preparation

for their change, will be matter of most distressing, or most soothing recollection, to them, in whose constant memory they will live. Have they died, and left little hope that they were found with their lamps trimmed and burning? They have themselves inflicted the bitterest sorrow on those, who were deserving of nothing from them but the kindest treatment. They have themselves smitten the wounded heart with the blow far the hardest of all to bear. Has the strict trial of their sickness proved that a christian spirit reigned within them; has the soul seemed to be purified, as the body decayed, and, as the outer man perished, the inner man been renewed day by day; has an unrepining patience, a benevolent interest in others' welfare, a filial confidence in God, have affections evidently set on things above, has the faith, which is the soul's anchor, and the hope that maketh not ashamed, and the charity which never faileth, testified to all beholders, that the spirit, which has ceased from its labors, was meet to be taken to its rest? A legacy of consolation has then been left, which a mind of just sensibility regards as inestimably more precious, than would be a prince's treasures. My hearers, when we conceive of our friends as grieving for us, do we feel grateful for their attachment? Do we think that, if permitted to be invisibly near them, we should feel grateful to any, who would solace their grief? For doing them this kind office, let us remember we are ourselves by anticipation to provide. As long as, in health, we can be giving them various evidence of our devotion to duty, we may be laying up in their memories stores of consoling thought against their time of need; and when, in sickness, we are naturally led to think more of the supports, to which, in the coming exigency, they may have recourse, let us not fail to consider, that here our own power over their feelings is great. It is for us to afford them grounds for that assurance of our transfer to a happi-

er state, which, when reflection has had time to do its tranquillizing work, will chasten their sorrow for our loss into a pensive, indeed, but a calm and complacent remembrance. And the christian spirit is the surest contagion of a bed of sickness. The strong faith of the dying is communicated to the bereaved; and there are those, who, nerved and cheered by their communion with an excellent departed mind, have felt that they should be doing what was unworthy of him whom they mourned, if they allowed themselves to lament him with a loud and a common sorrow.

Was it saying too much, my hearers, when, in remarking on another class of these duties, I observed that, in important respects, it would be hard to name a place of more responsible service than a sick chamber; a place where christian principle is better tried, or a more heroic spirit may shine forth? Is it not true, that that is a very indefensible use of language, in which we speak of sickness as withdrawing a man from his duties? On the contrary, is there not danger rather, that, unless he takes great care beforehand to avoid that issue, his duties will be then found to crowd too much? If he has, up to that time, his faith to establish, his sins to repent of, his wordly affairs to arrange, his enemies to reconcile, his wrong deeds to atone for, and his testimony to a hitherto neglected religion to bear, — in short, his whole duty to do; — who will say that the time has come for him to be discharged from labor? who will not rather say that he has somewhat too much upon his hands? Let him, whom sickness arrests in that melancholy condition, be warned, as he values his soul's deliverance, to apply himself with all speed and vigor to the work, appalling as is its magnitude; to attempt still to do it all, and persevere till his last hour of consciousness, that he may do the most which by any possibility he can. But as for us, my

friends, let us leave no such tasks for a time which may not be allowed us; a time which, if allowed, we shall feel to be far too short and interrupted for such a work; and a time of distress and feebleness, when it will be a great added affliction and hardship to be pressed with such cares. What we may do in health to make the burden of sickness lighter, we are greatly imprudent if we omit. Some weighty duties, as we have seen, which are of a nature, when once done, to be dismissed from our minds, and which otherwise must devolve on sickness, we are able to do, and do better, in health. Others arise out of occasions, which are of our own making, and which if we avoid, our task will be so much diminished. If we make no enemies, we shall have none to reconcile. If we do little injustice, we shall have the less to redress. Others, of which self-examination and repentance are examples, though they will remain to be further prosecuted in sickness, since their demands never cease while we live, are, if we would do them well, to be begun in health; and the acquaintance, which had been formed with them then, will stand us greatly in stead in the hour when strength and heart are failing. And even as to those duties of sickness, which are most strictly occasional, the preparation for performing them, as we could best desire, must be a previous attainment. When we would be patient under the sufferings it brings, we shall find that we have secured a vast advantage, if, in the former trials of life, we have used ourselves to the exercises of self-control, and reliance upon God. And when we would address to those whom we love the solemn admonitions of a death-bed, we shall do this to so much the better purpose, if we are able to draw from the rich stores of a long christian experience; to speak from the fulness of a heart that has long been with Jesus. — For whoever in sickness must undertake the whole work of life, the time of sickness is indeed greatly to be

dreaded. But for him, to whom it only remains to carry on further what he has prosperously begun, and, undistracted by a load of cares which belonged to another period, but were neglected then, to give his mind to those which properly belong to the present, with the benefit of a preparation which, with a seasonable diligence, he had made, — to him it puts on quite another aspect. For him it wears no such frown. With a tried patience for its pains, and a faithful buoyant spirit for its duties, he can take a generous pleasure in filling up its few lingering hours with that useful service it permits, and greet with a meek, but a serene and happy hope, the coming of the last of the train.

SERMON IX.

DUTIES OF THE POOR.

LUKE VII. 22.

TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED.

Our religion, which undertakes to furnish principles for the regulation of the conduct of all men, adapts its instructions to those, among others, who, in the casting of the lots of life, are appointed to the trial of poverty. Poverty indeed is a word of a relative, and not entirely definite sense. It is applied in a comparison between an individual, and any whom fortune has more favored; and the same person who is accounted poor by others more prosperous, and perhaps by himself, passes for rich in the estimation of those who are poorer still. But this indeterminateness in the application of the word creates no difficulty in presenting an exposition of the duties of the poor. Whoever regards himself as poor, whether with greater or less reason, him those duties avowedly concern, and to him their consideration may do good.

I. The first which I will name among duties of the poor, is the cultivation of a spirit of acquiescence in the appointment of providence.

1. Why should the poor be dissatisfied with their lot? Is the wealth, which they want, the only one, or the chief, among the blessings of life? Would they think the rich not to be justified, if they complained, for example, of the want of health? Yet what is fortune in comparison with health, and what riches would not be thought by their possessor to be well employed in its purchase? Are not most of the bounties of providence, and the means of enjoyment, free to all men alike? Are the beauties of the material world veiled from any man's view, because he cannot call an acre of land his own? Does the sun shine more brightly, or the air breathe more softly, or the rose shed a richer perfume, for the rich than for the poor? Has the former any exclusive advantage in respect to the pleasures of the mind, or the supreme enjoyments of virtue? And have the few objects of a reasonable desire, which the rich are able to engross, any value, in their aggregate amount, in comparison with the many and more important, which are as accessible to others as to them? How unjust then, as well as ungrateful, to fix the attention upon these. And how unreasonable, to lose all the satisfaction which we are invited to take in the greater, in vain lamentations that we cannot join to them the less.

2. Again; while it is not to be denied, that a competency is, in the abstract, a blessing, and that wealth may be made so, in the proper hands, still we cannot reasonably regret that we are poor, unless we could be perfectly sure that we are fit to be rich. Our comparative poverty may be greatly for our happiness. It is no small knowledge to 'know how to abound.' Many are the men whose minds languish, whose spirits fail, whose lives are worn out in wearisome unprofitableness and trivial discontents, merely for want of that stimulus to action, which necessity so effectually provides. And very many there are, whom the temptations of

wealth have involved in sin, and in its consequences, of misery here and hereafter. Such might be our fate, were our trial the same; no man can be sure for himself that it would not be; and if it would, the condition, which we are inclined to lament, is what in all good judgment we should be bound to choose.

3. Once more; granting wealth to be ever so sure and absolute a blessing, what sufficient plea will a man make for being discontented because he is not wealthy? That some should be rich and others poor, is an unavoidable consequence of the institution of property; and the vast utility of that institution to all men, no one, who has not a savage's ignorance or a savage's vagrant tastes, for a moment thinks of doubting. Alone, it might be almost said to make the difference between man, the animal, distinguished from other brutes by not much more than his erect form, and man, the cultivated being of society and sentiment. Without it, it is obvious to say, the regular and productive processes of industry would be at a stand; for the sweat of the brow is not coveted for its own sake. With as much prospectiveness as immediate calls of appetite should dictate, men might hunt like tigers, or fish like storks; but who would plant a field, which all the chances of the months before the time of harvest would as much favor his neighbor's reaping as his own? Even the miserable spontaneous productions, which we should then have in place of the various growth of a cultivated soil, would not be suffered to reach their natural maturity and abundance; for whoever fell in with them, on the great common, would sooner pluck them himself, unripe, than leave them to be gathered by and by, by some other passenger; and animals, used for food, would, for the same reason, be slaughtered, by whoever encountered them, half grown. Without property, there could be no barter; and here of course would be an end to divi-

sion of labor, and accordingly in great part to that invention, variety, despatch, and skill, in the arts of life, which now add so greatly to the power of man. In short, with the disappearance of the only universal and permanent motive to regular application of their distinctive powers, men would sink, in their relation to the rest of animal nature, into a feeble and incompetent race of brutes, while the diversities of mutual human relation would have become no other, than those of exterminating warfare, suspicious alienation, and perpetual alarm.

To complain, then, that some are rich, and others poor, would be nothing else, (I repeat it,) but to complain of an institution, the absence of which would reduce all men to a condition more deplorable than is that of almost the poorest now. For as long as property exists, this inequality must exist as its incident. There is necessarily a tendency to transfer, and (through it) to decrease on one part, and accumulation on another; and accordingly, make an equal distribution of it this day, a year would not have passed, before differences of diligence and capacity, with other causes, would have restored a like distinction to what now appears. To complain, again, that there are such inequalities, would be to complain, that, when a man is needy, there are others, who, not being so, are able to help him; to furnish the resource, which else he would not have. And it would be, moreover, to complain of the power which the poor man possesses to become a rich one, by earning from the rich, by his labor, what they are prepared and disposed to pay. That condition of things which causes some to be poor, and others to be rich, so far from being a cause of discontent, is in all respects far happier for the poor themselves, than would be the only other conceivable condition of things, which would leave all men miserably unprovided alike. When we call ourselves poor, it is by comparison

with others; but in truth, if we are needy, the circumstance that others are less so, or not at all, so far from being an inconvenience to us, or a cause of dissatisfaction, is, on all accounts, a great blessing, looking to our own interests alone.

II. I name humility as a second duty of the poor.

I am not saying, my hearers, that a man is to be ashamed of his poverty. It is never disgraceful, except it have some criminal cause; and, on the contrary, there are circumstances, in which it affords occasion for an honest pride, as far as such a sentiment can be allowed by christianity. I am not saying, that a poor man should show anything of a servile deportment to a rich one; or give up, through deference to him, any proper confidence in his own opinions, especially in his own rectitude; or resign anything due to his character, or to his just claims. I am saying nothing of all this. We speak very vainly, when we speak of such a thing as the possession of more or less gold making a distinction like this, between beings who are alike God's creatures and children; who have minds of the same formation; on whom the same obligations lie, and to whom the same hopes are opened.

But I am suggesting, that pride, which is a great sin in all, is a very unhappy and hurtful sin in the poor. And if an arrogant pride is one of the besetting sins of affluence, it must be owned that the temptation to a jealous pride is one of the trials incident to poverty. Attaching much more importance, than is reasonable, to the distinction of wealth, one is apt to imagine that others, who possess what he wants, are disposed to look down on him on that account; and the diseased vision sees affronts and slights, where dispositions the opposite of what would have led to them may very probably prevail. There is, I repeat it, no reason why a person should think the less of himself because he is poor;

but certainly there is no reason why he should think of himself more highly, or insist on marks of respect with which otherwise he would have dispensed, or hold himself above what otherwise he would have practised. To indulge pride, in our poverty, is to make the worst of our condition. It subjects us to numberless disquietudes in our intercourse with other men, prompting to exactions on our part, which will not be met, and misconstruing conduct which should give us no concern. It may urge us to expenses which for prudence' and for honesty's sake we ought to avoid, and withhold us from employments which it would be right and honorable for us to undertake. There is nothing in poverty itself, which, as to interchanges of friendship, puts nearly as much distance between the poor and others, as their allowing it to be seen, that they are proudly suspicious of the treatment they receive, and proudly averse to the duties which their circumstances prescribe. If pride in the rich is oppressive, in the poor it is apt to be censorious and factious; and, considering that among them it may operate most extensively, it may in them, perhaps, do most harm. Excited by this spirit, they come to see all that is faulty, and as little as possible that is good, in those from whom fortune has made them to differ; to regard what is done for them as their right, or less than their right, and no subject of gratitude; and, in the angry excess of this feeling, it leads the poor to regard the rich as their natural enemies, and to be disposed to do what they may to disappoint and injure them; to look on public questions as if they were questions of oppression or security between the rich and the poor, and take their course accordingly. If that humility, which is a duty in all men, thus guards against some of the principal sufferings and the principal temptations incident to a condition of poverty, assuredly it has, on that account, in that condition, a special claim to be cultivated.

III. This brings us to say, thirdly, that it is the duty of the poor, to use all lawful means to extricate themselves from the condition, in which they find themselves placed. And this remark is in no way inconsistent with that which was first made; for that alone is to be regarded as a trial appointed to us by providence, which we are unable, in the lawful use of powers, with which God has endowed us, to escape.

Poverty, into which misfortune has brought us, or in which inability to improve our condition keeps us, is, as has been said, no dishonor. But not so, with that which is the consequence of our own improvidence or sloth. God has given us strength of body, and faculties of mind, in order to enable us, without being burdensome to others, to provide for our own wants and those of our natural dependants. To forbear to use these powers, and so to depend on the labors of others for what should be the fruit of our own, is nothing less than a species of palpable dishonesty. Nor does the obligation end here. St. Paul has rightly taught us, that we ought to 'labor, working with our hands the thing which is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth.' Our vigor of body, and ability of mind, such as they may be, are a trust for charitable uses to others, as well as for our own benefit; and no one, who possesses the power of acquiring, ought to be content, without acquiring enough beyond the demands of his own wants, to enable him to supply wants of others, who do not possess that power. Discretion too, to be frugal, is a trust of the same nature with strength to be diligent. To indulge tastes for diversions, for display, or for luxuries, beyond their means, is one of the least pardonable vices even in those, who, though able to provide such gratifications for themselves, disable themselves thereby from making suitable provision for the future, and from doing anything for the relief of

others more needy. Expensive pleasures argue a manifest want of principle, where there is not superfluous wealth. The more sparing the poor are on themselves, within the limits of decency, the more do they dignify their poverty. Upon them whom others must maintain, the obligation is stronger, to make themselves chargeable for the supply of none but real wants, and, by such industry as they are able to practise, to relieve the charge which they occasion; and while they who must receive from others, because they would do nothing for themselves, deserve little respect, far different is the case with him, who uses all exertions meanwhile to abridge his wants, and to provide for them himself, according to his ability. He stands blameless, so far, in the sight of God, who requires of no man a service beyond what he is able to render; and he stands fair in the sight of men, who are always the most ready to esteem and help those, whom they see the most disposed to help themselves. As a matter of principle, in short, to spare and to toil, according to their power, is a duty of the dependant poor, that they may make their dependence as little burdensome as possible; and of those who are not dependant, that they may possess that share of the bounties of providence, and of the pleasures of generosity, which God, when he made them capable of attaining, appointed them to enjoy.

IV. To maintain a spotless integrity, is, in the fourth place, a duty to be urged upon the poor.

If no man can safely dispense with a fair character, peculiarly is the possession indispensable to him whose character is his all. Others may buy good-will, or at least adulation; but if the poor will have friends, he must obtain them by his good desert. Others have resources of a different kind; but for him, his character is what he must live by. But since, in point of conscience, all men lie alike under this obligation, it would not be named as peculiarly incumbent

on the poor, were it not that their condition is attended with some peculiar temptations to violate it. 'Feed me with food convenient for me,' prayed a wise man, 'lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of the Lord in vain;' and, in addition to those temptations which the necessities of poverty suggest, there are others incident to the condition of the poor, as not being so directly subjected, as the rest of men, to the watch of public opinion. Let not the poor ever indulge themselves in such a thought, as that, because another has more than he knows what to do with, of what they want, they have a right to appropriate any portion of it to themselves, by an unfair advantage. The superfluous abundance of the affluent is just as much his, as the scanty earnings of the poor are theirs, and it is just as wicked dishonesty to defraud him of it. Let it be their well-earned boast, that they are scrupulously true to their engagements, and faithful in their service, of whatever kind; remembering that the labor, for instance, for which they have contracted, is, to its utmost point, just as much due to their employer, as their employer's money is due to them. Let them never stoop to become the subjects of bounty under false representations of their circumstances, thus fraudulently taking from a generous benefactor, and at the same time, from some really deserving object of charity, who would otherwise have received what has been bestowed on them. Let them be sternly resolved, that their necessities shall never tempt them to become instruments of the vices of the rich, or minister to them in any unworthy service. And let them covet the satisfaction of feeling, that, if their character is not the subject of so much observation as that of others, they are able to do without such a safeguard. Let them strictly abjure these low indulgences, which so often degrade those, who persuade themselves that their vices are too little noticed for censure; or who see themselves countenanced by associates;

or who give into the sad delusion, that the hardships of their lot entitle them to such a compensation. By a godly, righteous, and sober life, let them win their own respect, the respect of all good minds, and the approbation and favor of Almighty God. Thus they will secure all the happiness, (and it is ample,) of which the condition where they are placed, admits. Thus they will act well their part, in which it has been justly said, that all the honor lies.

V. Finally; let the poor be admonished to prize and follow the religion of Jesus.

Other dependence, (a miserable one indeed,) other men may fancy that they have; but to them to whom this world seems a place of struggle and sacrifice, the hopes of the gospel may well be especially dear. In our religion, they will find what will sustain them in their privations, and nerve them for their toils. In our religion, they will learn that their place of duty, as well as what others fill, may be made a place of honor and privilege; for the Son of man himself 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.' In our religion, they will find a peculiar adaptation to their wants; its whole spirit breathing patience, lowliness of mind, and a noble-principled activity, and its author having no place where to lay his head, and when he was rich, choosing poverty for our sakes, 'that we through his poverty might be rich.' The poor, above all men perhaps, should prize the gospel for the blessings which even now it bestows. It is the charter of their privileges. It secures them against the oppressions, and confers on them a title to the good offices, of their brethren, who are more favored in worldly circumstances. It gives to their labors the weekly respite of the sabbath. It has built for them schools and hospitals. It has raised them from the miserable vassalage in which they would once have been found, as the agents of cruel, or the victims of licen-

tious vice. It has apprized them of one place, the presence of 'the Lord the maker of them all,' where, the causes of inequality that belong to this probationary state removed, the rich and the poor will meet at last together; and it has taught them, by assertion and example, how ready God is to choose 'the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.'

SERMON X.

DUTIES OF THE RICH.

1 TIMOTHY VI. 17.

CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD, THAT THEY BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, NOR TRUST IN UNCERTAIN RICHES.

HAVING spoken freely, on a part of the last Lord's day, of duties of the poor, I propose now to use equal liberty in attempting to expound some of the obligations of the rich. Coveted as their condition is apt to be, there is none which has more dangers or more duties. And, on some accounts, they are more liable than others to remain unapprised of these. Able to make it for the interest of their associates to be in favor with them, adulation is what they are exposed oftener to hear, than caution or remonstrance. The habit of self-indulgence which their advantages tend to beget, naturally extends itself to the estimate which they form of their characters. Dispensed from the stimulus of some motives, which compel poorer men to a serviceable use of their powers, they are tempted to put too easy a construction on all their responsibleness. And such, in fact, is the result of these and other similar influences, in action on their minds, that the remark was made not without justness, any more

than without force, that 'if some persons were to bestow one half of their fortune in learning how to use the other half, it would be money extremely well laid out.'

I. The first idea, which is suggested by the charge to the rich, not to be made high minded by their trust in uncertain riches, is of the arrogant spirit, which their condition is apt to engender.

If a man is born to a great estate, unless under the control of singularly judicious friends, he is commonly from his infant years the object of obsequious attentions, which give him an altogether undue importance in his own view. If his wealth has been of his own acquiring, he is led to value himself on the capacity and conduct which have been thus manifested; and if it has come to him by some happy accident, then he is tempted to assume a double portion of what he conceives to be the deportment of the condition he has reached, that he may keep the more out of people's thoughts the condition from which he rose. Elsewhere, the pride of riches is rebuked by the more confident and stately pride of hereditary rank; and the man who would be purse-proud, if there were nothing in his way, is made to feel that the distinction, on the ground of which he would claim consideration, is a distinction of very secondary order. But among us, (such is the nature of our institutions,) the pride of wealth meets no competition but in the pride of office, which, though riches are, as our text affirms, uncertain, is of yet more uncertain continuance than they.

It is not to be denied, my hearers, that abstractly the possession of wealth may reasonably be regarded with satisfaction. It is the possession of a power to command for one's self many conveniences and advantages, and to diffuse extensive benefits. It is to be owned, that the deference which in various ways the rich are in the habit of receiving, and the power with which they are conscious of being in-

vested, and the security of which they are prone to be deceived into assuring themselves, — if they are seen to be somewhat elevated thereby above a modest self-estimate, recommend them to a degree of allowance on the part of others, on the ground of their temptations being peculiar. But this is favor, not right; and the excuses which may be charitably made for them, they ought resolutely to refuse to make for themselves. Besides, it is on the other hand reasonably to be expected, that their superior advantages should be used to teach them a nicer sense of duty, and a better estimate of things, and forbid them to fall into such an error. Error, I say; for what is that independence on which they would venture to presume? Rightly viewed, is not the dependence at least, between them and the poor, mutual, — if the obligation be not discerned to be so? 'It is a mistake,' says a wise author, 'to suppose that the rich man maintains his servants, tradesmen, tenants, and laborers. The truth is, they maintain him. It is their industry which supplies his table, furnishes his wardrobe, builds his houses, adorns his equipage, provides his amusements.' And suppose that the independence in question, while it lasts, were real, instead of wholly imaginary, would it be safe to put such an insolent trust in what is proverbially of so uncertain continuance, that, not even waiting to be withdrawn by force or guile, it is apt to take to itself wings and fly away, — would it be safe, I say, to place such an offensive trust in what is so uncertain, as to provoke, by anticipation, the vindictive visitations of those, among whom we may soon be numbered, (however our inferiors now,) and to deserve like measure to what we have meted, from them who shall then be raised above us? Or if this fancied independence were ever so real and permanent, what ground would there be then, even for self-complacency? Is it a thing of so very great consideration? Is it nearly so great

a thing, either in itself, or as a fruit and token of our own judicious cares, or even, perhaps I might ask, as a means of power, is it nearly so great a thing as health, for example, of which, though some think of being grateful for it, no man thinks of being proud? Or, if otherwise, who made us to differ from another, but God in his gracious providence? And what have we that we have not received from him? And if there were all reasons for a self-complacency of some kind, still what reason would there be for pride, a passion which is merely the torment and bane of the soul, doing far more than counterbalance all the advantages which any one may possess, and by which he may think to justify it? If there may be an exacting and disdainful pride of wealth, why not of office and of talent too? and then what occasions for affronts and jealousies are spread over the whole extent of society. How vain this demand for undue respect from inferiors! How surely does it defeat itself! How well known is it, that the deference which any of us receive, is, for the most part, that which we do not claim! If, instead of consulting our own happiness as much as theirs, by condescending to men of low estate, we permit ourselves to say or do to them what is overbearing or contemptuous; or dispense ourselves from rendering attentions for which they look; or even make an ostentatious display of our superiority, which is painful to them; how reasonably may we expect, that they will take care to wound our pride, in some such way as to cause its idle gratification to have been dearly bought! If, instead of securing that good will of dependents, which from the rich man is the cheap purchase of a little gentleness and regard for their feelings and convenience, they be treated with sternness or indignity, it will be owing to their forbearance, if his comfort, which in endless ways is in their power, do not largely pay the forfeit. If prosperity, to which we have been raised, make us insensible

to the wants or feelings of such as we may esteem beneath us, then there is vastly more cause why we should be ashamed of our inhumanity, the effect of wealth, than proud of that wealth itself. If it have tempted us to break ties of early friendship, or to attempt to keep out of sight ties of honest consanguinity, then we are scarcely worth remonstrating with, but, instead of pride, we have occasion for something lowlier than humility. And in heavy addition to the retributions of this life, themselves sufficiently serious, what retribution have we cause to look for, at his hands, who hath instructed us in lowliness of mind each to esteem other better than himself!

II. A second fault against which the rich are warned, in the charge to them not to be made high minded by their trust in uncertain riches, is one which, etymologically indeed, though not according to present use, is more directly suggested by the epithet high-minded, than that which has been first remarked upon. It is that vain and thoughtless elation of feeling, which, without taking the form of an offensive deportment to others, is itself a wasting evil to the individual mind.

It is well for us all, my friends, to have cares. There is no one indeed who has them not, if he is disposed to see them; but for any one, who is not so disposed, it is happy if there are those which will force themselves upon his attention. For serious cares of any kind make the mind serious, which so far is a great good. Without them it becomes light and giddy. There are persons, who constitutionally seem almost incapable of being led, in the wantonness of their prosperity, to do or wish ill to any human being; whose feelings towards others appear all to be feelings of a superficial, indeed, but as far as it goes, a genuine kindness; but for whom we see, that the wish which a true friendship would dictate, would be that they should have some of those

'changes,' for want of which 'they fear not God.' They are the spoiled children of prosperity. There is nothing substantial in their character. There is nothing deep in any of their feelings. The business of their lives is a weak and capricious self-indulgence. The scriptures, which subject the human character to so rigid an analysis, are faithful in exposing this tendency. 'He gave them their request, and sent leanness into their souls.' What a just as well as strong picture this, of the condition, in which a luxuriance of outward blessings is contrasted with that dearth of all that is best in the mind and heart, with which we sometimes see it followed. — 'The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.' How many the instances in which this sentence has been executed; in which minds not absolutely ill-disposed, nor incapable under other circumstances of blessing and being blessed, have been intoxicated and made merely giddy and frivolous by too much good fortune, as we call it, and seduced away from every strenuous and honorable application of their powers. — 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' How natural a boast for a mind inflated by abundance, and by the deference which it brings, and by the habit of seeing its own will a law; yet a boast how presumptuous, an expectation how fallacious, a confidence how sadly ill-adapted to prepare for the changes which time may bring. The very waywardness and eccentric humors, which such a feeling generates, are the occasion of more wants than any prosperity can supply; and the affluent circumstances, which to others seem adequate to obviate every wish, are but experienced by the possessor to increase their number. — The feeling is as much at war with the spirit of self-discipline and improvement, as with that of content. 'Be not high-minded, but fear,' says the apostle, using the self same expression with that in our text, and conveying a lesson the most needful to be observed by all who are intent

on growth in grace. But how little consistent with this humble and sanctifying spirit of self distrust, is that vain elation of the mind which we are now considering. — And what a stubborn and impracticable religious insensibility does it threaten to create. 'When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord.' This is an admonition, called for by well ascertained tendencies of human nature. Jeshurun, when pampered, was restive and untractable; 'then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.' 'They were filled and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me.' This is the history of many an envied, but unhappy man's experience; and if it would be going too far to infer that this kind of prosperity is therefore not to be desired, we needs must own that it is not every mind which has the strength to bear it.

III. A third charge, to be given to the rich, respects ill uses of their superfluous abundance. If habits of hurtful luxury are not expressly mentioned in the text among the dangers of that condition, they may, however, be considered as implied in its warnings, since the elation of which we have just spoken tends to extravagance, and if such habits do not grow out of a trust in uncertain riches for happiness, they do spring from a trust in what uncertain riches will buy.

1. Undoubtedly, in affluent circumstances, other things being equal, there is a degree of exposure to expensive vice; I speak of what is most universally called by that name. The power of indulging every wish that may arise, is itself an encouragement to vicious wishes. The mind, free from the cares and engagements, which occupy those, who must make their livelihood, feels a void, unless trained to relish the pleasures of study and usefulness; and, in its craving for excitement, is liable to apply to that which vicious

pleasure will afford. And when we add to this the comparative exemption, with which the rich may flatter themselves, from the control of public opinion, we must see cause to allow, that, at least to the inexperienced possessor of ample fortune, wealth offers a temptation to profligacy; that it is in danger of being regarded but as a 'provision for the flesh,' as the apostle calls it, 'to fulfil the lusts thereof.'

2. But profligate habits are not the only kind of hurtful luxury. It is for no man's good, to be surrounded and solicited by an excessive portion of the conveniences of life; certainly for no man's good, to be intent on providing in every possible way for his present accommodation and ease, which the power of making such provision strongly tempts him to do, unless he have been wise enough to pre-occupy his mind with some nobler pursuit. To be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, if it belong to a man's station, and he does it without caring for it, and takes good heed that it shall not make itself necessary to him, nor interfere with any duty, may be but a harmless trial of his established virtue. But if the mind devote itself to the arrangements of such luxury, though then doubtless less depraved than by the grosser habits to which we have referred, it is perhaps equally enervated, and equally made selfish. Though then indeed called away to what is less pernicious, it is equally called away from what are the proper concerns and tasks of an immortal spirit. The rich are by no means to regard themselves as released from the obligation of making a circumspect and judicious application of their resources; for the highest motive to this is not found in that necessity of making their means go the furthest for their present advantage, which here creates the only difference between the poor and them; and if it were, the principle would be the same, for if there are estates which will support a liberal expense, there are none

which will support an inconsiderate and wasteful one. But if it be forbidden pleasures on which they would lavish, then they corrupt their minds. If it be a less blamable self-indulgence which they study, still they enfeeble and waste their minds. And if they employ their wealth in an ambitious and prodigal display, then they convert what should be the support of their virtues into the sustenance of that vanity and pride, against which the first caution in our text is aimed; and instead of all the good, which they ought to study to do to their inferiors in fortune, they do them the great harm of exciting them to a rivalship, which cannot but be injurious as far as it goes, and which may prove no less than destructive.

IV. The last warning, to be suggested to the rich, relates to what comes directly under the description of trusting in uncertain riches; namely, an over-estimate of wealth as a source of happiness; an unfounded imagination that 'a man's life consisteth,' as our Lord declared that it does not, 'in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

At first view, it might be supposed that they would set the highest value upon wealth, who were most in want of it, and least acquainted from their own trial with the circumstances which limit and countervail its enjoyment; according to that proverbial truth, that whatever has not been proved by us, is magnified in our imagination. But in this instance, experience does not on the whole justify such reasoning. Great wealth becomes a subject of pride to its possessor, not for the benefit of its uses, judicious or otherwise, but for the fame of the possession; and by a very subtle association in the mind, what had been at first justly desired only as a means towards the attainment of other advantages, comes to supplant in the affections the power which it has been held to represent, and, (in consequence of the pains which have been employed, and the pleasure which has been

felt, in its acquisition,) to be regarded as itself an ultimate good, and to be doated on as if there were just so much happiness deposited in the coffers, which are destined never to be opened, except to crowd them more. Thus past experience and daily observation go to justify that remarkable phraseology of scripture, 'when riches increase,' — not when they fail, as might seem more reasonable, — 'when riches increase, then set not thy heart upon them.' When they increase, there are not a few men, in whom, if the trust in uncertain riches, inspired by them, do not accomplish the effect contemplated by our text, making them high-minded in any sense, it does what is no better, it makes them low-minded in the worst sense of that word; it makes them base and sordid. Let him who, in the dignity of hereditary opulence, finds himself influenced to 'trust in his wealth and boast himself in the multitude of his riches,' — or who, flushed by personal successes, experiences the temptation immoderately to rejoice, 'because his wealth is great, and because his hand hath gotten much,' — let him pause and consider what the passion is, with which he is in danger of being possessed. It is one of the most grovelling which infest our nature; the most unworthy of an intellectual, heavenly essence like the human soul; the most adverse to those spiritual enjoyments, which make the soul's proper wealth. — It is an insatiable and continually goading passion. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' — With a singular perversity, it goes on to sequester more and more from all use, whether of its possessor or of others, the very thing which more and more it covets, thus in fact annihilating its worth, in proportion to the greediness with which it seeks after its accumulation. 'When goods thus increase,' well asks the wise man, 'what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?' — It is a

passion strong in its temptations to dishonorable and oppressive acts; so strong, that it was not thought too much to say of old, 'blessed is the rich that is found without blemish and hath not gone after gold, for it is a stumbling-block unto them that sacrifice unto it, and every fool shall be taken therewith. Who hath been tried thereby, and found perfect? Who might so offend and hath not offended, or done evil, and hath not done it? Who is he, and we will call him blessed, for wonderful things hath he done among his people.' — The rich should be contented. How inconsistent, to make what they have professed to pursue as the means of living at their ease, — how unreasonable, to make this, when acquired, the cause of new dissatisfactions. — The rich should be scrupulously just. Who can better afford to be, if that were a consideration? And if they make use of the resources or the consequence which their affluence gives them, to overawe or overreach a poor man out of his right; or to keep back their equitable dues to the government which protects them, and thus lay an unequal burthen upon others for the support of institutions to which themselves are especially beholden; or otherwise to circumvent, or extort, or oppress; in whom might such practices not be defended? — The rich should be disinterested. Along with a prudent and religious care of their affairs, they should be above everything sordid, or which looks like sordidness. Is it no privilege to set that example? Is it of no importance that that example be set? In a world of selfishness, not to say artifice, and dulness of the sense of honor and duty, like this, is it not of vital concern that the credit of a magnanimous and generous spirit be kept up? And from whom ought an exemplification of that spirit to be looked for, if not from them, who have the least apology of all men for doing it any violence?

These seem to be some of the temptations of the rich, my hearers; temptations which, in many a bright instance, we trust, are wholly overcome; obstructions in the way to everlasting life, which, by many a conscientious rich man, are effectually surmounted. But if temptations incident to that condition, then doubtless all precautions deserve to be taken against them, by whosoever, in that condition, is sensible with what great diligence he ought to keep his heart. What we have considered as yet, — abstinence from the sins which most easily beset them, — makes the negative part of the duty of the rich. The apostle goes on in the context to prescribe some further rules for their government, urging some of the positive duties which their condition permits and requires; and, following the course which he marks out, in a summary consideration of these, (should we be permitted at a future time to do it,) we shall probably see reason to allow, that, devoted to their due discharge, the rich will indeed find their place in society to be, what it is commonly thought, a place of special privilege.

SERMON XI.

DUTIES OF THE RICH.

I TIMOTHY VI. 17, 18, 19.

CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD, THAT THEY BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, NOR TRUST IN UNCERTAIN RICHES, BUT IN THE LIVING GOD, WHO GIVETH US RICHLY ALL THINGS TO ENJOY; THAT THEY DO GOOD, THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, READY TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLING TO COMMUNICATE, LAYING UP IN STORE FOR THEMSELVES A GOOD FOUNDATION AGAINST THE TIME TO COME, THAT THEY MAY LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE.

In considering this morning the admonitions, which, in the first part of our text, the apostle addresses to the rich against besetting sins, some may have been led to the conclusion, that, however on other accounts desirable, and however in fact desired, their condition is to be owned to be one of peculiar spiritual danger. A tempted condition, no doubt, the scriptures uniformly represent it to be, and all just observation confirms the view which they exhibit. But when we proceed to consider, as at this time I propose to do, some of the duties which this condition permits and requires, we shall probably find reason to allow, that, in the due discharge of these, it is capable of being made a place of distinguished privilege.

I. The first duty and privilege of the rich, which I shall name, is that of a faithful employment of their leisure in a personal culture of the mind and heart.

I am not denying, my hearers, that that was a kind as well as a just decree of providence, which sentenced men to eat bread in the sweat of their brow. Doubtless there is much more happiness and virtue in the world, more peace of mind, more benevolence and self-control, than if, under a different disposition of things, the seasons were made to yield to us a spontaneous increase, and there was no occasion for the mind to be exerted, and the time to be employed, in the exercise of the various arts of life. I am not saying, that a man has reason to complain, because providence has placed him, as it has the great majority, in a sphere where hard labor is his lot. His place is an honorable and a happy one, if he will make it so. God will hold him accountable for the use of no other opportunities for private discipline than what he possessed, though it is his duty, by their careful employment, to make what amends he may for their scantiness; and again, many men there are for whose benefit it would not be, to have the trust of ample leisure, because, good men as they are in other respects, they have not the power or preparation to use much leisure well. Nor am I maintaining, once more, that a life all leisure is anything like an enviable life. Of that idea I shall dispose under another head. But for a person who is capable of using hours of retirement rightly, as the rich, with all their advantages, unless they have been greatly untrue to these, ought to be supposed to be, it may well be reckoned a high privilege to possess them; and, at all events, when possessed, there is a solemn responsibleness for their proper use.

The characteristic superiority of the rich consists not in the greater abundance or variety of material blessings, which

they are able to command; in any greater power to suit their tastes as to what they will eat, and drink, and wear. They can consume no more than their poorest neighbor; and if they feast on the greater delicacies, his is the advantage of the more natural relish. They can wear no more, unless it be what is superfluous; and if it be of a finer texture and a richer hue, there again the lilies of the field are rivals that outshine them. And if wealth will buy many gratifications, which imaginary and factitious wants demand, still there are apt to grow up, along with them and in advance of them, fastidious and morbid tastes, which may leave wholly on the side of the poor, the advantage of the satisfaction which they derive from the supply of their more reasonable wishes. No; the privilege of the rich consists not in the power of any such self-indulgence, but in part, at least, in the opportunity they have to retire from more crowded scenes and pressing occupations, and enrich and discipline their minds with study and reflection. It is a happy opportunity, — every one capable of using it, feels it to be so, — that of employing a portion of uninterrupted time, which more active duties do not demand, in invigorating and informing that intellect, which, next to virtue, (with whose exercises too it is intimately allied,) is the source of our highest pleasures, and our closest bond to the divinity; in enlarging the range of meditation on the agency and will and glories of God, by an extended acquaintance with what he has done in the world of men, and is always doing in the world of matter, his wonderful administration in the world of mind, and his assurances of a yet brighter manifestation of himself in the world of spirits; in adapting, in solitary thought, the lessons and encouragements of religion to the exigencies of one's own soul, and maturing and establishing and tracing out the principles, which one proposes to embody in all conduct; in investigations, which may add to the resources of action and

happiness, by enlarging, if it so please God, the intellectual property of mankind, or, at least, by qualifying to impart what is already possessed to such as it would not else have reached; in elevating, habitual communion with the source of all good influences, the fountain of intellectual and moral life and joy. Such a stated disposition of a portion of their leisure deserves to be part of the system of those, who find themselves in a condition to dispose of their time at will, while life is yet before them; and, by such as have been the industrious artificers of their own prosperity, how reasonably may that period be greeted, when they may go aside from the perplexity and pressure of active service, to arrange the stores of wisdom which their experience has amassed; to attempt to settle the many questions, which, during their active career, must have presented themselves, and been stored away without a solution; and to breathe after the contest, to tranquillize, and dispose their minds in all fit order, for the change which is approaching.

II. Such will naturally be a part of the course of him, who means not to trust in uncertain riches, and who feels his want of some object of confidence, more stable and satisfactory. In no view can they be a fit object of confidence to any one. If hoarded for the sake of possessing them, they are evidently then of no avail; if for the fame of possessing them, it would seem that there could be no pleasure in this, able to satisfy the mind; if for the sake of personal gratifications which they will purchase, they are much rather then, in a reasonable view, to be suspected, than to be relied upon. Uncertain as they are, were they ever so desirable, they are no object of confidence like what the text proposes in their place, the living God who cannot change nor forsake us. Boon as they are, the confidence which they excite is evidently not to be reposed in themselves, but in him, of whose favor they are but the token; who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

In regard to the necessity and obligation of trusting in the living God, (the duty which our text next proposes,) the rich, though they may imagine otherwise, or more probably, may forget the obligation which they will not deny, the rich are undoubtedly under the same obligation with the poor. There is nothing in their wealth, or in what it can procure for them, which will make them happy here, if God be not in all their thoughts; and, assuredly, of all which they possess, as they brought nothing into the world, so they can carry nothing out, to purchase any relaxation, if that might be, of the judgments which may await their misplaced confidence hereafter. But the rich, if any men, have peculiar reason to place their trust in God, who hath given them all things so richly; and to withhold that trust, argues in them a peculiarly stubborn and hard ingratitude. He who can persuade himself, however unjustly, that he has few blessings in the past to acknowledge, has a plea to make for indulging small reliance for the future; but what can the pretence be, when, by the very multitude of favors, the mind is intercepted in its ascent to the benefactor, and the goodness which they prove is forgotten? Yet, on the other hand, such are in fact the influences of this condition on the mind, that a pious spirit, in the trial of great worldly prosperity, is accounted peculiarly honorable, and receives from the good peculiar honor; and, though this is not among the highest motives to its cultivation, still it is not to be wholly disregarded in the light of an indication of its worth. And, absolutely as trust in God is the duty and the happiness of all men, and peculiarly as on some accounts it may be expected from the rich, perhaps there is scarcely a stronger consideration to be addressed to them in behalf of the culture of that spirit, than the consideration of the great efficacy which waits upon their example. Happy that community, in which the most prospered are careful to let their light shine, from

the eminence where providence has placed them, before men, leading men to glorify their heavenly father! Happy, when they, who seem to have all earthly resources at their command, bear witness, in all their lives and conversation, that these resources are inadequate to their needs, without 'the hope laid up in Heaven!' What a spirit of contentment, and acquiescence, and satisfaction in religious pleasures, may be then introduced into the place of that envy, with which the rich are so often viewed. How effectual the lesson then impressed, of the worth of those attainments, free to all, which no worldly advantages can dispense with or replace. How attractive the example, when presented in association with all that men are so apt to respect and prize. And happy they, who with such advantages may bear such a testimony! If they were capable of coveting wealth for the sake merely of the power which it confers, it has no power to communicate, which is so mighty, (to say nothing of its beneficent nature,) nor any power of which they may be so sure of witnessing the marked and wide effects. The rich man, who shows that his uncorrupted heart's best trust and hope are in the living God; that the happiness, he most prizes, is in those religious pleasures in which all may as largely share; that in his more prospered sphere he has found no joys like the joys of devotion, no possessions like what faith has enriched him with, — that man's life shines a guiding and cheering light to the world, and many may find their way by it to Heaven. The responsibility of the rich, in this particular, is distinctive. It belongs to them to dispel the illusion, through which it is believed, by so many, that the gifts of fortune are able to awaken in an unsanctified mind a satisfying pleasure. The possessors of these gifts are competent witnesses to the contrary. Their testimony will be received. And of all the services, which they can render, there is none to be more esteemed; and of all

the power, which they may possess, there is none so worthy to be envied.

III. Once more; it is to be charged upon the rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, — in short, that they be prompt to liberal offices of usefulness; and this is a duty of the rich so obvious and eminent, that, in common estimation, it seems to throw others almost into the shade.

Other men, no doubt, are to do good too. The rich are not to monopolize that great enjoyment. Providence is not so partial; but every man, who is able to labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, is entitled to promise himself, and is called on to enjoy, the satisfaction of giving to him that needeth. But the privilege of the opulent consists in their ability to be 'rich,' — to be abundant, — 'in good works;' in their being at all times 'ready to distribute,' without having to wait to provide the means; in their power of 'willingly communicating,' cheerfully and without difficulty or embarrassment imparting, and that over a wide extent. That they are designated and introduced to that office by virtue of the very place which they fill, is a pregnant truth, which the rich need to apprehend and familiarize. Their wealth is not committed to them for their own sole use, even their honest, and moderate, and irreproachable use. Though they have one kind of right to it all, on which, for weighty reasons concerning the general welfare, man must not be suffered to encroach, in the sight of God they have no right to that portion of it, which, superfluous to them, another requires at their hands for the relief of his pressing necessities. It would be unreasonable to suppose it. To use the words of that clear casuist, whom I have before quoted in another part of these remarks, 'when the partition of property which once was common, is rigidly maintained against the claims of indigence and dis-

tress, it is maintained in opposition to the intention of those who made it, and to his, who is the supreme proprietor of everything, and who has filled the world with plenteousness for the sustentation and comfort of all whom he sends into it.' And the scriptures confirm this reasonable view, in that phraseology, in which they represent all men, who have received from God, as bound to minister of what they have received, one to another, being thereby constituted 'stewards,' trustees and dispensers, 'of his manifold bounty.'

I am not saying, my hearers, that, because a man has what he does not immediately want, he is therefore to give it away. To endeavor to lay by a suitable provision for our age, is a part of justice; and to make suitable provision for those whom we must establish and must leave, is also a part of justice, and a primary part of beneficence too. I am not denying the abstract truth of that precept, which bids us be just before we are generous. When, in the order of time, one or the other must have precedence, it is justice which has the claim to it; but, in the great majority of cases, we may by due care be generous while we are just. I am not saying, that a man accounted rich is to give when and what he is asked to give. It is his right, — nay, it is his duty, — to be his own judge of ability on the one part, and of occasion on the other; nor has any one the smallest right to condemn him for withholding, for his obligation is subject to be determined by circumstances, which only himself may know. I am not saying, that he ought to give to what he does not himself discern to be a good object, however unanimously and vehemently others may proclaim it to be so. I am not saying, that he ought to give to anything, what, in the exercise of a conscientious judgment, he believes would better remain by him, for some different use, whatever that may be, which recommends itself more to him. But I am all in the dark as to the interpretation of our religion, if he

is not to hold himself ready and prompt to give, as often as good cause is presented, and as liberally as the cause justifies; if he is not desirous to do all that his disinterested good sense tells him is his fit part in this distribution. Having, by the supposition, reached that point, where he is able to afford superfluities for himself, he is bound to reckon it his duty, and he may well reckon it his precious privilege, to afford relief to the necessities of others. And this, like everything which belongs to duty, like everything which is to be done, is to be done upon a plan. He is bound to make it as established a part of his system of life, (I do not say as large a part; that is a question I do not touch, and endlessly modified as it is by circumstances, it must be left to private consciences; but he is bound to make it as essential a part of his system of life,) to spend from his uncertain riches upon others, when occasion may appear, as to draw from them for his own supplies.

But bounty to the poor is not all of usefulness or charity, though it is far from being an unimportant part. The great interests of a community in all generations, the interests of learning and religion, especially under some forms of society, depend mainly on the patronage of the rich; and here is a sphere for their munificence, of incalculable moment. The leisure of the rich, as well as their money, is a trust; and, in the various occasions for important service which arise in social life, and which men, burdened with private cares, cannot meet, the common parent seems to have made gracious provision for saving them from the shame and tedium of unprofitableness, and turning their powers of being useful to good account; and in that demand for some employment, which is an instinctive want of the mind, and which no possessions will satisfy, he seems to have furnished the needful impulse, to make them, in the use of these occasions, benefactors to their species. The rich too have the

deepest stake in the welfare of society; they are able, other things being equal, to do most to advance it, and without their coöperation others can do at best but little; and all these considerations should be so many motives, to engage them in the tasks of a disinterested and active public spirit. They honor themselves in the best sense, when they benefit their associates with the recorded labors of their minds. Thus to use their freedom from meaner tasks, to widen the knowledge, or adjust the principles, of the society where they live, is a most becoming and praise-worthy ambition. Everything is useful and commendable, which confers happiness without consequent injury; and the rich are privileged, in being able largely to confer it, in ways which cost them nothing; nay, which advance their own happiness meanwhile. From them a word or look of condescension or courtesy is to dependents a valued gift; and the deportment, which is not regardless of such kindnesses, does its part in the all comprehensive duty of beneficence. Such kindnesses are the right of inferiors. They are becoming in him who renders them, and the giver here is never known to be a loser. A rich man's influence is a trust with him, which often he may cheaply use in rendering substantial favors. Counsel which he is able to give, or some trifling appropriation of time and thought, which it is well for him to spare, may often relieve a perplexity, or prevent a serious harm. And, to make an end of suggestions under this head, which occur in such abundance to every mind, that it would be hard to find an end, the importance of his example in all respects is never to be lost sight of. Integrity and disinterestedness witnessed in him, sympathy with others' fortunes and feelings, self-denial and frugality, modesty and moderation, diligence and affability, attention to all interests which he can serve, his readiness to every good word and work, will commend themselves to a general observance, and

make him extensively a benefactor in the blessings they will spread. Such a power to recommend one's own practice is a great endowment. To use it well is the way to a distinguished crown.

The final clause in our text, 'laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,' has much perplexed the commentators, on account of a supposed incongruity in the figure which it presents; and they have even ventured to suggest, that the text has in the lapse of time been corrupted in this place, and that the apostle wrote what, translated, we should read, laying up in store for themselves a good treasure, or deposit. But it seems to me that the language, as we have it, rightly rendered, is altogether appropriate, and remarkably condensed and forcible. I understand the apostle as saying, charge the rich not to trust in uncertain riches, but to do good with them, to be rich in good works, and so on, so that what they lay up in store for themselves, — what they amass, — instead of being a stumbling block to their feet, as else it might prove, may be to them a good foundation, — or as we should say, a good stepping stone, — upon which they may rise to lay hold on eternal life. And here, my friends, we have the compensation of those spiritual dangers, to which wealth no doubt exposes. It spreads its toils, but no one, passing among them, is compelled to be ensnared by them, and if he escape, the greater is the merit of his circumspection; and, on the other hand, it imparts peculiar powers, which, rightly applied, will enable one to become an eminent servant of God, and benefactor to his species, — to rise to a post of conspicuous and extensive usefulness, whence to lay hold on eternal life. No one should envy the rich. Every one may find service enough to please God with, in the place where his lot is cast. Every one may have enough for happiness

without wealth, and no one can be sure for himself that he is competent to withstand its trials. But none are more enviable than the rich, when they have grace to resist the temptations incident to that condition, and to make its benefits available for the more thorough culture of their own spirits, the more manifest exhibition of the power of the faith of Jesus, and the more extensive service in that work in which all good beings are agents of the divine benevolence. Happy above other men, they who are thus able to acquit themselves of this very serious trust! We are told, my hearers, of a blessing of God, which 'maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith.' It is no other than that, which makes riches the instrument of such effects. May that excellent blessing from above attend each one of you, my friends, who are subjected to this trial; that, diligently laboring through this life to lay up the better treasure for yourselves, you may be found at last abundantly rich towards God, and be sharers in the inalienable inheritance.

SERMON XII.

NATURE, FOUNDATION, AND BENEFITS OF FRIENDSHIP.

PROVERBS XVIII. 24.

A MAN THAT HATH FRIENDS MUST SHEW HIMSELF FRIENDLY.

THAT christianity permits its disciples to indulge no enmities, is a truth very well understood. That it also discourages them from cherishing friendships, is an opinion which to many of my hearers will appear extraordinary, but it is an opinion nevertheless which has been advanced upon high authority. The author* of a treatise, on some accounts valuable, on the internal evidences of our religion, in maintaining the proposition, that 'every moral precept founded on false principles is entirely omitted from it,' has referred to active courage, patriotism, and friendship, as examples. Of the latter, with which we are now concerned, he says, that 'it could never gain admittance among the benevolent precepts of christianity, because it is too narrow and confined, and appropriates that benevolence to a single object, which is here commanded to be extended over all.'

* Soame Jenyns.

This doctrine I propose at the present time briefly to examine, and so to proceed to the questions, what friendship is, in the proper acceptation of the word; with whom a christian may contract it; and what are some advantages which it promises.

I. The doctrine, as far as it is an argument against the lawfulness of a christian's contracting partial friendships, you perceive is founded on a theory and an assumed fact; the theory, that friendship appropriates that benevolence to a single object, which christianity commands to be extended over all; the fact, that friendship has not gained admittance among the benevolent precepts of that religion.

1. As to the former, it proceeds on the ground that it is of the nature of the partial affections, to counteract the more comprehensive ones which christianity enjoins; an assumption quite incapable of being maintained. The truth is, that, in the nature of things and in the plan of providence, the affections must first be directed to near objects, that they may be exercised, and acquire strength, to extend themselves vigorously to the more remote. There may be, no doubt, an excessive devotion to one or a few objects, which, engrossing the mind, leaves room for no other; and this, in the view of our religion, is criminal. But, though an expansive affection may thus be excluded by partial ones, it absolutely cannot exist without them. Universal philanthropy is the outer circle of kind regard, which is only to be formed by the successive expansion of those of family, kindred, friendship, neighborhood, and country, which are comprehended within it. Domestic society is the nursery of the affections, whence, having acquired sufficient maturity, they extend themselves into a wider, and still a widening sphere, and, the further they spread, the greater vigor do they afford evidence of having acquired. But it is in vain for a man to pretend that he loves all mankind, unless

he loves his kindred and his associates still more, because they have all the claims on his regard, which belong to them as a part of mankind, — a part of the race which he professes to love, — and, additional to these, they have the peculiar claims, more or less strong, which belong to them as sustaining the specified distinctive relation.

So much for the reason of the case. And it is equally a great misapprehension of the rules of our religion, to suppose that, in inculcating a universal love, it forbids discrimination as to the degrees of that love; which would do no less than frustrate the wisdom of providence, which, in appointing the various connexions of life, has provided for our being peculiarly disposed to serve those, to whom our services may be easiest rendered, and are most important. The happiness of our families depends most upon us; this it is most in our power to promote; and therefore the affections of kindred are made the strongest. After them, we are most able to serve our habitual associates; and accordingly habitual intercourse is made to quicken in us a benevolence of the next degree of intensity. And, after our associates, our country; and therefore, in our friendly sympathy, our country takes the next rank below. The larger bond of a common nature does not bring the multitudes, whom it comprises, by any means so much within our reach; and accordingly we are so made, as to feel the impulses to beneficent action, which belong to it, still less. There is danger that we shall not feel them at all, and shall too readily suffer occasions of variance to overpower them; and, for that cause, the duty of universal charity is strongly enforced by our religion. But while it teaches us to love all men, and while, I scarcely need stop to say, it recognises the principle that a proposed benefit to mankind at large, may well be of a magnitude to outweigh all more private regards, it does not assume to defeat the wise arrangements

of providence in our constitution, by insisting that we love all men alike. On the contrary, St. Paul's injunction of the most comprehensive charity, — to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, — is coupled with the qualifying direction, to do it 'especially unto them that are of the household of faith;' and the same apostle passes a censure of peculiar severity on them who provide not for their own, and especially for them who are of their own house; speaks of men 'without natural affection,' with an intimation of the peculiarly aggravated character of their selfishness; and insists repeatedly on the obligation of 'brotherly love,' in distinction from that of a wider charity. Thus certain partial, — not exclusive nor narrowing, but partial affections, — are evidently countenanced and required by express terms of scripture; affections, whose relation to a universal charity is precisely similar to that of what we commonly call friendship. The former, as much as the latter, require so to be indulged, and so to be regulated, as not to interfere with the obligation to a universal good-will. But as natural affection and the rest are not condemned by christianity, on account of any tendency of that sort, — but the contrary, — no more is such a condemnation uttered or implied of friendships founded on voluntary association of any innocent kind.

2. As to the fact adverted to, in the argument under our notice, namely, that christianity does not in terms inculcate friendship, it might be replied, (what every reader of the New Testament may be supposed to know,) that this circumstance proves nothing conclusively against any practice, which claims to be considered a virtue. It would be an entirely unauthorized assumption, that it was the object of christianity to furnish in itself alone a thorough code of circumstantial rules; and that, accordingly, everything not expressly recommended in the New Testament is of course no virtue, and everything not verbally denounced there, of

course no sin. A complete statute-book of morals was not what men chiefly needed. The light of nature still showed them, in the main particulars, what their duty was. But it did not sufficiently impress the strength of the obligation to do their known duty. It failed of furnishing sufficiently efficacious sanctions. That is to say, in the department of sanctions rather than of instructions, of motives rather than rules, lay the chief existing deficiency, which, in the system of moral discipline, christianity had to supply. In respect of some virtues, it is true, the sentiments of men were rude or erroneous; and, to meet this exigency, it stated such with precision, and enforced them with emphasis. The duties of humility, forgiveness of injuries, and government of the thoughts, are instances. But as to others, it was, for the most part, content to urge in general terms attention to 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report,' forbearing from the superfluous task of defining what were things honest, pure, just, and lovely. Does any one doubt, for example, that gratitude to benefactors is a duty? Yet where does the New Testament inculcate it? May it be maintained that suicide is not a crime? Yet can any one show the passage, where the New Testament forbids it? Its instructions, as was to be expected, were in some degree occasional, having reference to the moral condition and needs of those to whom they were addressed. In some of the persons, for whom St. Paul wrote, natural affection was feeble; and his language tended to fortify it with the sentiment of duty. In some of those, to whom our Lord spoke, it was on the contrary so strong, as to prevent that entire devotion of themselves which his cause demanded; and them he taught, 'whoso loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' It is wrong needlessly to offer ourselves to sufferings and death; and the wiser christians

of the second century had to use all their authority to hinder their more enthusiastic brethren from such uncalled-for exposures. But not so during our Saviour's ministry; indifference then needed to be stimulated, not undue warmth to be checked, and his language was, 'he that will come after me, must take up his cross and follow me.' Whatever habits, then, of affection or conduct, were, at the time of the promulgation of our faith, either unduly or sufficiently in repute, assuredly the fact that it does not expressly inculcate cannot be pleaded as proof that it discountenances them. And this was at that time the case with friendship. Men did not so much need to be encouraged to cultivate it, as to be prevented from cultivating it to the forgetfulness or prejudice of a more expansive charity.

But while this remark shows, that there is no foundation, of the kind supposed, for the argument we are combating, its benefit might be waved, in the present instance, because no one perhaps has ever maintained that friendship is a virtue. A philosophical ancient who has treated of it, uses the guarded language, that 'friendship seems to be a kind of moral habit of mind.' This is justly said; because friendship arises from good feelings, and prompts to good actions. But it cannot be affirmed to be every good man's duty to enter into this relation; and therefore we could, in no case, have a right to expect to find a precept to that effect in the christian code. If a christian were entirely solitary, he could not form a friendship. If he lived only among bad men, he ought not to form one. Even if he lived among good men, whose pursuits and whose sentiments were in important points different from his own, he would be in no condition to form one. The contracting of a friendship is in its nature a voluntary thing; not a dictate of universal duty, and therefore not a demand of religion. But still, so far from discountenancing friendships, christianity does, we may say,

all that a system for universal use could do, for their encouragement. It disposes us to them, by exciting us to mature to their utmost vigor those kind and generous affections, which, as they are matured, will infallibly attach themselves, with peculiar strength, to persons between whom and ourselves there exists a peculiar congeniality of sentiment, and opportunity for frequent intercourse. It gives them authority in the language and example of Jesus Christ. His language recognised that relation, as one which he himself did not refuse to sustain. 'I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body.' 'I no longer call you servants, but I have called you friends.' It is recorded of him that 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus;' the bystanders interpreting his emotion on the way to Lazarus' tomb, said, 'behold how he loved him;' and repeatedly, in his own gospel, St. John is distinguished by the title of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' Once more; in the relation of intimate friendship, as in several other relations of life, the parental, for instance, and the conjugal, our religion, while it does not require us to form it, gives us light concerning the principles on which it must be formed, if at all, and the duties which, being formed, it imposes on us. If it does not pronounce that every man must have friends, all its inculcations of faithfulness to obligations, which we have assumed, will, in an application to this case, go to sustain the sentiment of our text, that 'a man that hath friends must shew himself friendly.'

II. But it is time that we proceed to the second proposed subject of remark.

Friendship may be defined, attachment matured by frequent intercourse. Attachment is essential to it. There are numerous vicious combinations, in which the individuals united seem animated by one mind, and act together with a strenuous coöperation; but the only feeling called

forth in them is selfish, and not only has nothing to do with friendship, but has been repeatedly seen to be consistent with the most violent animosities, which were only restrained or disguised, so far as not to endanger the common object. There are associations of convenience, in which men seek the advantage of each others' aid for the promotion of the lawful interests of all; but associations of this kind, though among kindhearted men they not seldom lead to friendships, are not themselves such. It needs not be said, that it is no friendship, which animates him who seeks to ingratiate himself with another, for the sake of the benefits which the pretence of friendship may obtain for him. To be the object of such false professions, is one of the painful compensations of the lot of the prosperous. 'The rich,' says the wise man, 'has many friends;' but he means friends of this description. 'Wealth maketh friends, and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.' There are persons, to whom the title of summer friends has been applied; who without any such directly sordid view to the promotion of their interest, attach themselves to the prosperous and eminent for the indulgence of their vanity, in seeming to be in credit with such persons, or load with favors and attentions those who are coming forward into notice, to signalize themselves as the patrons of rising merit. Such individuals are not without their use, but it would be a gross abuse of language to call them friends. They are a kind of thermometer, by which one may know the temperature of the public feeling towards him, their assiduities with exact regularity subsiding or rising as that feeling grows cool or ardent. There is again a feeling of satisfaction in the agreeable qualities of another, which unjustly claims to be called friendship. If we so value his powers of giving pleasure, whatever they be, that we should not be willing to dispense with them when such a privation of ours would be for his good, we show plainly that we are

not his friends, but merely our own. Friendship, then, is real attachment. The word may be used in a loose sense for good-will in general; but, in strictness of speech, it is attachment matured by frequent intercourse, for it is not a single emotion, but a habit of feeling, and though we may be said to be friends to those with whom we have little or no intimacy, this is not, as is well understood, in a precise application of the term. I add here only, that there seems no reason for representing friendship, as some have done, as a bond uniting two persons only. There is nothing so exclusive in the nature of the connexion; nor does it impose any duties which interfere with one another, when extended to a larger number.

III. What does a sense of duty urge, in regard to the choice of friends?

In respect to this, religion does not assume an impelling, but merely a regulating and restraining power. We may choose an associate with reference to the good qualities which we discern in him, and the benefit we think we may derive from his intimacy, and this associate may in time become our friend; but we cannot from such considerations choose a friend, for the affections submit to no such dictation. Attachments are the spontaneous growth of the heart; and though they are likely to be directed to worthy or unworthy objects, according as the heart is well or ill disciplined, still they are excited, not so much by any reasoning or calculation upon the benefits to be derived from them, as by congeniality of taste and feeling, habits of intercourse, and other circumstances of inferior moment. The proper office of religion, then, in regard to the choice of friends, is to restrain us from giving way to our inclinations, when they would lead us to form injurious connexions.

1. There are not many maxims of greater practical use, than that 'evil communications corrupt good manners.'

The influence of a friend upon our character is exceedingly powerful. We are continually subject to his persuasions, imbibing his sentiments, and acquiring prepossessions in favor of all of which he sets us the example. No truly religious person, then, will think of contracting a voluntary intimacy with one, whose character differs widely from that at which he himself is aiming. He will see that the wise king's rule, 'make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go, lest thou learn his ways and get a snare unto thy soul,' has no less force when applied to other vices, than when restricted to that of anger; and he will be scrupulous to make no friendship with habitual transgressors of any class, lest, which is too probable, he should learn their ways and get a snare unto his soul. He will not be persuaded by anything to deviate from the great rule, to choose his friends only among the good.

2. It is desirable, again, that our friendships, besides being favorable to our characters while they exist, should be lasting, because commonly much pain, and too often much irritation, is felt when they are dissolved. It is accordingly the dictate of prudence, and therefore, (in a substantial sense,) of religion, to the young, to form their friendships with those, from whom, as far as they can anticipate, they are not likely to be separated by dissimilarity in the condition and pursuits of after life. A neglect of this rule, among persons whose ardent affections and inexperience of the world will not admit the idea that any diversity of fortune can ever affect their confiding intercourse, is continually the preparation for much disappointment and distress, when estrangement in the common course of things takes place on one side, and upbraidings follow on the other. And to the same end of providing that our friendships may be intimate and uninterrupted, it is important to form them with persons, whose feelings, opinions, tastes, and connex-

ions have, to a considerable extent, a correspondence with our own; for no very cordial intimacy can long subsist, where occasions of contradiction and interference are often arising, or dissimilar calls of interest or duty perpetually interpose their estranging claims. And these are considerations of great weight in favor of the comparative worth of those friendships, which are cherished within the circle of kindred.

The author of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus well insists on the wisdom of choosing a friend, according to such rules, with deliberate caution. 'Be in peace with many,' he says, 'nevertheless have but one counsellor of a thousand. If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him. For some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble. And there is a friend, who, being turned to enmity and strife, will discover thy reproach. Again, some friend is a companion at thy table, and will not continue in the day of thy affliction. But in thy prosperity he will be as thyself, and will be bold over thy servants. If thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and will hide himself from thy face. Separate thyself,' (that is, as to interchanges of confidence,) 'from thine enemies, and take heed,' (that is, in the choice,) 'of thy friends.'

IV. What advantages may we promise ourselves from a friendship formed upon these principles?

There is scarcely anything earthly, my hearers, from which we may expect so many. I cannot recount them, for, as its Roman eulogist almost without exaggeration said, 'we have hardly more continual occasion for fire or water, than for friends.' In youth, a friend's kindred enterprise animates us in the course we begin together. In manhood, he cheers us by his sympathy, and guides us by his counsel. In age, we tell over together the fortunes we have passed,

and our spirits are tranquillized and refreshed by that generous communion. In perplexity, we relieve our burdened minds in making him the partner of our hopes and fears, prospects and embarrassments. In good fortune, we are doubly happy, because he rejoices in our happiness. In adverse circumstances, half the pangs that threatened are warded off from us, because he divides our grief. We form our plans with the knowledge, that, in executing them, we shall not be reduced to depend on our own powers alone. We take hazards, sure that should we come into peril, there is another mind watchful for our rescue. We fear reverses less, knowing that, till they shall ha e overwhelmed another also, they will not be permitted to fall with an unrelieved weight upon ourselves. We are less in dread of the scourge of the tongue, when our good name is not left to our own unaided vindication. But it is not by any means for its favorable influence on the circumstances of life alone, that we are to set a high value on a worthy friendship. It meets those demands of the heart, which, silent though they be, are the most importunate of all. What the world sees of men's resources for happiness is of very little account, compared with what is required to meet the necessities of their better nature. Friendship admits men to the elevated pleasures of confidence, to the happiness of unsuspicious affectionate communion with congenial minds; and thus it supplies a craving no less natural, than the demand of the physical appetite for food. It is of higher worth than has yet appeared. It is a powerful instrument for the religious culture of the soul; nor can any man be said to enjoy all possible advantages relating to his spiritual welfare, who has not some religious friend with whom he is accustomed to 'take sweet counsel, and walk to the house of God in company;' with whom he has been used to an interchange of thought and feeling on the subject the most cherished in the

hearts of both; to whom he instinctively resorts for aid and guidance, for approbation and encouragement; by whose example he is himself confirmed; by the imparted fruit of whose reflections and experience he is himself enriched; who has led him to love the ways of wisdom better for having trodden them in his society, and thus truly found them to be paths of pleasantness and peace; with whom it is his dearly cherished hope that he may continue to be united in a strict friendship through eternity. Seen in this light, it is little to say of a virtuous friendship, that it is one of the choicest blessings that cheer our pilgrimage of life. The immortal mind owns its excellent culture; and heaven will mature its precious fruits. The son of Sirach spoke no more than its value, when he said, 'change not a friend for any good, by no means; neither a faithful brother for the gold of Ophir.' 'A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he that hath found such a one, hath found treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life, and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord,' he continues, with a repetition of that moral of weighty meaning, 'whoso feareth the Lord, shall direct his friendship aright.'

SERMON XIII.

DUTIES OF FRIENDS.

PROVERBS XVIII. 24.

A MAN THAT HATH FRIENDS MUST SHEW HIMSELF FRIENDLY.

THE instruction, comprehended in these words, is of great interest to any, who are so happy as to sustain the relation with which it is concerned. The man that hath friends must be strangely insensible to his privilege, if he do not earnestly desire to deserve and secure it by showing himself friendly. Those of us, then, my hearers, who are distinguished by that choice gift of a gracious providence, will be disposed to an attentive consideration, to which I now invite you, of the duties thereby devolved on us. I propose to add a few words respecting the occasions which justify the dissolution of a friendship, and the course which, after such a dissolution, it becomes a good man to pursue.

I. The offices of friendship are in general no other than the various offices of benevolence. We owe to a friend all the kindness which our nature and our religion prompt us to cherish, and, as far as his and our situation may admit, all the useful services which they prompt us to bestow; help

in his undertakings; sympathy in his joys and sorrows; relief for his wants; care for his virtue; defence, counsel, candor, courtesy. But the relation of friendship affords opportunity for a peculiar cultivation of those generous affections which are due to all men, and in some respects their exercise is modified by it; so that, in speaking of the obligations of friendship, we are chiefly to attend to those particulars, in which they may be more or less distinguished from the general obligations of benevolence.

1. Thus, friends show themselves friendly by the practice of a mutual confidence.

The reposing of confidence, it is plain, is not a demand of that charity, which is due from us alike to all our brethren of the human family. We are not obliged to trust our affairs, (secrets they could not then be called,) to the knowledge of bad men, enemies, or strangers. But confidence is one among appropriate tokens of affection united with esteem; and, unless we are in the habit of extending it with freedom to those, whom we have chosen from all the world, professing to entertain for them a special attachment and respect, we show a distrust which is unkind, and inconsistent with our profession. That reserve, by which we imply that a friend might make a bad use of what we should communicate, and by which we keep it out of his power to render us sympathy or aid, is unjust, and, to a mind of sensibility, is wounding.

But here there is a caution needed. In order to be confiding, we are not to be treacherous. We are not to trust to one friend, what another, not expecting this, has trusted to us. This duty is apt to be forgotten in the ardor of inexperienced friendship. But it is beyond a question, that it is only of our own secrets that we have a right thus to dispose. Those which concern another, are that other's property; and it is no excuse to him for communicating them, that we believed we were trusting them in safe hands. The same

remark may be made of information, which reaches us, discreditable to another, apart from any pledge of secrecy. Reasons may exist for divulging it. But the confidence, which a friend rightly expects from us, is not one of those reasons. It is one of the many wise precepts of the apocryphal book, which I had occasion to quote in treating another branch of this subject, 'whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other men's lives, and if thou canst without offence,' (that is, without doing a wrong,) 'reveal them not. If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee, and be bold, and it will not burst thee.'

But the communication to a friend of what is not disclosed to others, is only one among many fit marks of the confidence we place in him. It only shows our confidence in his discreet reserve. We should show our confidence in his upright judgment, and interest in us, by resorting to him for advice. If the sentiments we profess for him are sincere, we shall naturally do this; and friendship is much grieved and discouraged on the one side, when, on the other, such confidence is withheld. We should prove that we trust his affection, by reluctance, and refusal within the limits of prudence, to listen to reports of what may seem inconsistent with it. The whisperer, that 'separateth chief friends,' should meet no welcome from us. It is cruel to lend a ready ear to what may be told us to a friend's disadvantage, and scarcely anything tends more surely to estrange him. We should show a confidence in his constancy to us, by not insisting to monopolize him to ourselves. There are persons, whose fondness is of that exacting sort, that they cannot bear to see a friend admitting any other to his intimacy. The course, which they are apt to take, almost ensures the evil which they fear; for jealousy of a friend betrays a want of reliance upon him, which leads to dissatisfaction, if not resentment, while a manly trust in the

attachment, which we value, shows our consciousness of deserving it, and may well knit it in inseparable bonds. Once more, we should testify our sense of the worth of our friends, by promptly accepting the evidences of their good will, and freely having recourse to them whenever they can serve us. To a generous mind no mark of confidence is more acceptable than this.

2. I observe, secondly, that, if a man that hath friends would show himself friendly, he must habitually afford to those friends the benefits of his best judgment.

He must not only give them his advice in all sincerity, when they ask it. So much he ought to do, according to his opportunities, for the most indifferent person. But he should attentively consider their circumstances, and watch their conduct, that so he may have the whole subject before him, and be able to profit them by the wisest counsel of which he is capable. And he should not wait to have it solicited. The relation, which he sustains, authorizes him, and calls upon him, to offer it whenever it may be useful. And very far is he from being justified in withholding it, because for the moment it may give pain. To blame is the hardest office of friendship, but it is the kindest, and that which above all makes friendship valuable, and effectually tests its truth. 'Bitter enemies,' says the Roman orator, 'are of more use than those friends who to some men seem kind; for the former often tell the truth, the latter never.' 'Faithful,' as we are assured on a higher authority, 'are the wounds of a friend.' 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him;' these are words of divine wisdom; and they teach emphatically that to practise the false kindness of some pretended friends, — to attempt to secure another's regard, by flattering his faults, or by forbearing to blame them, while our relation to him gives

us the privilege, — is to plot against his highest interest, is an act of most mischievous enmity, instead of what, with weak people, it sometimes passes for, an evidence of devotion. A true friendship is a principle generous enough to be bold. It will not, for fear of an honest word being ungraciously received, leave a friend exposed to all the loss, shame, censure, and future self-condemnation, which his misconduct may occasion. A christian friendship looks to consequences more remote and more important than these. It has regard to the everlasting destiny of its object. If it can do anything to promote his spiritual improvement, his religious well-being, it accounts this incalculably the most important service it is capable of rendering. A friend not afraid to reprove us is the best of all benefactors. A flattering friend is the worst of traitors. His sycophancy is like the less delicious cup of guilty appetite; 'at the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.'

But with all this, my hearers, there is an important sense, in which the declaration is true, that 'he that upbraideth his friend breaketh friendship.' A fault-finding spirit is by no means to be cultivated in friendly intercourse. It is to be our settled purpose to 'please our neighbor for his good to edification,' but we are never to neglect that part of this duty, which consists in pleasing him. We are studiously to provoke him, 'to love and good works,' but all other provocation we are to shun. We are to be carefully observant of opportunities, and inventive of methods, to offer our counsel so as to make it least offensive, and most effectual to the end in view. We are strictly to avoid everything that looks like assumption; everything that seems to betoken a sense of superiority. And we are not to be officious and captious in our censure. A disposition to see conduct in its most unfavorable aspect, is one of the least tolerable qualities in a friend. It is an office of friendship, to pass over some

things which are not such as it might wish. Perhaps they are misapprehended. Perhaps they are owing only to temporary causes, and will not be repeated. Perhaps remonstrance will only aggravate them. We ought not to have chosen for our friend, one in whose conduct we only find perpetual occasion for complaint; and, whether well founded or not, we may be sure that before long, such complaint will alienate him from us. Fidelity, in short, requires that, where his good is seriously concerned, we should not hesitate to express our disapprobation; but our regard for him will dispose us to an indulgent judgment; it will prevent us from setting down everything as wrong, which does not immediately approve itself to us; it will lead us to study the most affectionate methods of expostulation, where to expostulate seems our duty; and it will urge us strictly to avoid that querulous temper, which, like the constant dropping that 'weareth away stones,' will in time wear out the firmest friendship.

3. To show ourselves friendly, we must be disinterested and devoted in active endeavors for a friend's welfare.

We must give him our society, exerting ourselves, in all proper ways, to make it agreeable and improving to him. Is he in a situation to be benefited by any use, which we are free to make, of our fortunes or our influence? We should be prompt to place it at his disposal. 'Do good unto thy friend before thou die, and according to thy ability, stretch forth thy hand unto him.' Is his reputation assailed? We are his advocates. We are guilty of a most shameful meanness, if we listen without contradiction to the clamor raised against him, because it would be unpopular to oppose it. Our relation to him demands of us to interpose our own credit in society, if we have any, for his shield; and when no such exigency occurs, our duty requires us, as proper opportunities present themselves, to express the respect and

attachment we entertain for him, and so communicate, as we may, our sense of his worth to others. His objects in life may be the same as our own, and thus he may be in a situation to be brought into comparison or rivalship with us. But let us not pretend to call ourselves his friends, if we find ourselves capable of indulging towards him any feeling of envy or of jealousy; if we are not conscious of heartily lamenting his reverses, and rejoicing in his success. Does sickness visit him? It should be a strong call of duty in some other direction, that separates us from his side; and in his house of mourning, we should be frequent and familiar guests. In short, we should follow the vicissitudes of his lot with a tender fellow feeling, and an ever watchful readiness to alleviate its hardships, and multiply its joys.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary that I should add, that our obligation to serve a friend, abrogates none of the positive and permanent rules of duty. We may not serve him by encroaching on another, or doing anything unworthy of ourselves, or offensive to God. A principle so plain, did not escape the discernment of Pagan moralists. 'We ought,' says Plutarch, 'to coöperate with a friend in virtuous actions, but not in vicious. We should take counsel with him, but not in projects of mischief. We should maintain the truth with him, but not a falsehood. We should share in his fortunes, but not in his crimes.'

4. To show ourselves friendly, we must learn to practise forbearance towards a friend.

We must be exceedingly inexperienced, if we suppose that there will never be occasion for this. As long as we expect to have a perfect friend, it is certain that we do not know how to secure a good one. The great reason, why friendships are so short lived, is that altogether too much is commonly expected from them. Not only the young, but some persons who are not very young according to a com-

putation of years, are apt to indulge very romantic and unfounded imaginations on this subject. They seem to reckon on finding their friends always in a transport of affection; and when they are disappointed, they blame their friends, when they only ought to blame their own foolish expectations. A perfect friend must be a perfect man, a being whom we shall doubtless seek long before we find. Prudence and justice, as well as affection, bid us make moderate claims upon those whom we love. If at times they are reserved, if at times they seem unjust and unkind, has anything extraordinary happened? Does this prove anything more, than that, being men, they are not angels? And if we insist that we will have no friends, but such as are free from human infirmities, do we not then condemn ourselves to live in a solitude of the affections? Supposing our friend even to be what we may choose to call fickle, in respect to demonstrations of the sentiment he professes; that is, showing less appearance of strong interest at one period than he had done at another. It does not therefore follow, that we must forthwith renounce him. This is the part of a proud and hasty, not of a meek, a wise, or a generous man. To reproach him with unfaithfulness, will be much more likely to disgust and estrange him, than to recall him to his former fondness. It is much better to anticipate the probable occurrence of such fluctuations of feeling, and to pass them over, when they do occur, without notice. To remark upon them, must unavoidably be to create embarrassment and restraint, if not coolness. To overlook them, leaves free and full opportunity for the returns of warm affection. The weakness which calls itself sensibility, will take the former course; and, because it cannot bear a slight, will, by its petulance, provoke an animosity. The manliness, which values a friendship too much to hazard it for the indulgence of a pitiful resentment, will adopt the latter; and it will

probably soon be rewarded, by seeing the attachment, which it has so well merited, revive. Above all things to be avoided, when a friendship seems to be on the decline, is an assertion of our claim to it on the ground of kindnesses which we have rendered. To insist on being the object of gratitude, has not only no tendency to awaken, it has an absolute tendency to repel it. It is not in the nature of man to be excited to affection, by being reminded, on the part of a benefactor, of the benefits to which it is due; and if it were otherwise, no one, who has a proper sense of character, would be willing to extol his good deeds, to substantiate a claim for an affection, which those good deeds have failed to kindle. 'It is odious,' says the Roman, whom I have already quoted, 'to make demands, on the ground of favors we have bestowed. It is the part of him on whom they were conferred, to remember; not of him who rendered, to commemorate them. There are some,' he continues, 'who make friendships irksome, by their suspicions, that they are undervalued; but this rarely happens, except to those who are conscious that they are little worthy of regard.'

5. To show ourselves friendly, we must, once more, be constant to our friends. This is a particular expressly referred to in the context, where a friendship is spoken of, more faithful even than what belongs to the fraternal relation, itself one of the closest, among equals, which providence has instituted.

If friendship is worth anything, it is a sentiment strong enough to be superior to changes of fortune, to the separation of distance, and to the wearing power of time. Have we, in the course of a prosperous life, been elevated to a sphere above that which once we filled? We are not so fortunate that we can afford to resign an early friendship; for all our prosperity has brought us nothing so valuable.

On the contrary, we should rather prize it, because it has conferred on us the power of communicating happiness, where we have always desired to see happiness abound. Has the lot of our friends been disappointment and perplexity? They have only greater need of our kind offices, and we ought to be only the more ready to bestow them. 'There is a companion who rejoiceth in the prosperity of a friend, but in the time of trouble will be against him. But forget not thou thy friend in thy mind, and be not unmindful of him in thy riches.' 'A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.' Are they, in the course of events, so separated from us, as to forbid the privilege of frequent interviews? It can scarcely be so remotely, that ways are not open to keep up our friendly interest in one another; and no opportunities of doing this should be neglected, for such a tie is well worth all the pains we may take to keep it from being severed. Has much time passed, since that tie was formed? It ought only to make it closer. Good affections are not of the things, over which time exerts a destroying power. Year, as it follows year, ought only to give them new tenderness and strength, and establish them on the continually wider and wider foundation of grateful recollections of mutual kindness. 'Forsake not an old friend, for the new is not comparable to him. A new friend is as new wine; when it is old, thou shalt drink it with pleasure.' We are not even to abandon a friend, because he has been faulty. If he has been betrayed into error, he only experiences the greater want of that kindness, which shall soften for him the censures of the world, take him by the hand to lead him anew into the paths of wisdom, speak to him the language of encouragement, reconcile him to himself, and excite him anew to exertion.

II. And this brings me to speak, in a word, of occasions which justify the dissolution of a friendship.

Being a mutual bond, it is liable to be dissolved without our will. Our friend may, not in our imagination, but in reality, grow weary of us. While we take care to deserve that his regard should be continued, we cannot insist that it shall be so; and it is in his power to compel us, painful as it may be, to change the affection of intimacy for that of distant good-will. But we are not to make such a separation our own act, without sufficient reasons; because this would be an unfaithfulness to the engagements of friendship, and it would probably inflict pain, such as a benevolent man ought to be very reluctant that any one should suffer through his means.

These sufficient reasons are chiefly of two kinds. We may, and we ought to separate ourselves from a friend, when he has palpably transgressed towards us the obligations of friendship. And this, not so much because the implied covenant, which is mutual, is thereby broken, as because we can no longer entertain for him that esteem, which is the needful basis of friendship; because we can no longer with safety repose in him that confidence, which, as long as we acknowledge him for a friend, he has a right to expect from us; and because there is too much reason to fear, that what has passed has beyond repair destroyed, or at least chilled and blunted those delicate and cordial feelings, by which alone the ends of friendship are to be served. In short, it is time for the relation to cease, when the duties belonging to it can no longer be fulfilled. And we may and ought, again, to separate ourselves from a friend, when he has palpably separated himself from virtue. For we are not to expose ourselves to the fatal contagion of evil sentiment and example, in this its most subtle form; and, hard as the sacrifice of a friend may be, it should be less hard to us than the sacrifice of our integrity, or of what amounts to much the same, our needful securities for maintaining it.

But, let it be remembered, we are to interpret these rules not lightly nor selfishly; but deliberately, generously, conscientiously. We are not to renounce a friend, merely because he has given us occasion to complain of some slight offence. Such offences, he who has rightly considered the infirmities of nature sees that he has reason to expect, and he who knows the value of a sincere friendship will not think it worth his while to lose it by resenting them. An engagement to bear with them must needs be considered as implied in the forming of such a connexion. If we refuse to bear with them, we show ourselves wanting in two of the attributes of friendship that have been named, forbearance and fidelity; and it is not our friend's inconstancy, as we pretend, but our own, which is in fault. And so of the less deviations of a friend from virtue, such as do not imply habitual depravity, nor a dereliction of virtuous principle. The friendship we have professed for him is hollow indeed, if we desert him as soon as he begins to fall; if, because the worst of danger threatens him, we forsake him and flee; if we abandon him, when perhaps his tie to us is his only, and might be made his effectual tie, to credit and to virtue. If we do this because we are displeased, then our angry passions are stronger than our benevolence, in a case where this ought to possess a peculiar power. If we do it because we fear we might be lowered in the world's esteem by continuing such a connexion, then there is no name of contempt which we do not richly merit. In general, the more a friend has need of us, the more he depends upon us, the more our friendship may profit, and our estrangement harm him, the more reluctant should we be to be driven by his misconduct to such an issue.

III. Finally; whenever, by a painful necessity, that tie has been dissolved, the obligations, which lay on us, are by no means all released.

Though friendship ceases, the charity, which all men justly claim, is by no means to cease with it. Though the freest communications of love are terminated, it is not the visitations of hatred that are to replace them. Though confidence is no longer offered, still it must not be betrayed. It may be that some misapprehended act has been the cause of the disunion, and that, when an opportunity for explaining it comes, and the tranquillizing influences of time have prepared the resentful spirit to admit the explanation, the smothered attachment may revive; for it is hard to keep for ever asunder hearts, which have once been trained to beat in thorough harmony. Such an opportunity should be patiently waited for, and, when it occurs, should be readily embraced. And where there seems little hope of this, and causes more beyond the reach of peace-makers have led to the division, still, on every account, because we are willing to leave room for the healing influences to be exerted, which events, beyond our conjecture, may bring, and because, if we lay no stress on this, we yet wish to be faithful to our own dignity and duty, — because we intend to be upright, if we cannot be affectionate, — let us most strictly avoid increasing the irritation which exists, by needless recrimination, unqualified or contemptuous reproach, or any breach of the confidence to which the connexion now renounced, admitted us. These are the death-blows of wounded friendship. 'If thou hast opened thy mouth against thy friend,' (that is, in the hasty censure of an unguarded moment,) 'fear not, for there may be a reconciliation; except for upbraiding, or pride, or disclosing of secrets, or a treacherous wound, for for these things every friend will irrecoverably depart.' 'If thou bewrayest his secrets, follow no more after him. For as a man hath destroyed his enemy, so hast thou lost the love of thy neighbor. Follow after him no more, for he is as a roe escaped out of the

snare. As for a wound, it may be bound up, and after reviling there may be reconcilement, but he that bewrayeth secrets is without hope.' He is without hope, not only of relenting feelings on the part of him who was once his friend, but of being ever again the object of that confidence from any one, which, whenever friendly feeling ceases to guard the trust, he has shown himself thus capable of abusing. 'Whoso discovereth secrets, loses his credit, and shall never find a friend to his mind.' — A friendship once valued, however dissolved, can never be remembered without profound feeling, by a generous mind. Such a mind can never be gratified to hear of the calamities or disgrace of the unworthy and discarded friend. Still it will follow him with a lively interest, rejoicing in what it may learn of the happiness, lamenting what it may know of the griefs, of the heart with which it once so loved to sympathize. It will cherish no superfluous displeasure. It will admit no animosity. It will think of the friendship lost as of a precious departed blessing, and will feel no disposition to revile its memory. This it will esteem due to its own delicate feelings; for it cannot cast out to utter shame what had once been enshrined, almost like a holy thing, in the sanctuary of its love. This it will think the least expression it can offer, (and that too on one of the worthiest occasions,) of that charity which suffereth long and is kind, which thinketh no evil, which rejoiceth not in iniquity, which covereth a multitude of sins, which beareth all things, which hopeth all things, and which never faileth, though prophecies fail, tongues cease, and knowledge vanish away.

SERMON XIV.

DOMESTIC UNITY.

PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS, FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY.

THESE words express the happiness of a household, united in the bond of a mutual affection.

I. This sentiment of domestic affection it cannot be necessary to attempt formally to define, since, whatever peculiarity there may be thought to be in its origin, there is no prominent characteristic to distinguish it from other forms of friendship in its nature or expressions. It is the friendship which is mutually entertained by members of the same family, prompting them to rejoice in, and advance, each other's welfare. It is the principle of generous sentiment and action, which is continually manifested in the intercourse of the watchful parent and dutiful child; the affectionate brother and sister, husband and wife; the faithful domestic and considerate master. It is the spirit of that household, where each member is jealous for the reputation, and careful of the comfort, happy in the success, and grieved at the disappointments of the rest; where each has ad-

vice, aid, or encouragement, as the case may be, at the command of each; where protection is studiously extended on the one side, and gratitude cordially cherished on the other. It is the spirit of that home, which in thought we are continually revisiting, however far away from it we may be called in providence to wander; where we are sure of a fond remembrance in our absence, and a joyful welcome at our return.

Thus much with regard to the character of unity among brethren dwelling together, is sufficiently understood. It needs more particularly to be observed, that, in its most thorough exercise, domestic affection is to be proved by something more, than a readiness to perform services, or even to encounter sacrifices. In the case of this, as of many other commendable habits of sentiment and conduct, that which may seem the merely negative part, is still the most difficult and the most rare. It is easier and more common to show kindness in great things, than to refrain from unkindness in what may seem trivial. It is not unusual to see those, whose sincere and strong attachment to the inmates of their home is altogether beyond dispute, who it is plain would prove their affection at great cost and hazard, whose services are continually anticipating the occasion for them, and are never wanting to it when known, yet who, for want of attention to the important remark which has been made, are continually, by some negligence of deportment or irregularity of temper, causing uneasiness to the objects of their regard, which, if offered from any other source, they would be the readiest to repel. It is perhaps natural for us to suppose, that the sentiment, which we are conscious to ourselves of truly cherishing, will reveal itself in all our conduct without any caution of ours. But experience shows that this is a hasty, and in many instances a false conclusion. And this being so, it becomes us to take

strict care that our thoughtless conduct do not injustice to our sentiments, and misrepresent, and seem to contradict, the emotions which we feel. In proportion as we love our friends, it certainly imports us to be watchful not to make a contrary appearance. It is not our services for which they often have occasion, but for those evidences of good-will which have no other value, and for which occasion is perpetually occurring. By a delicate affection, a harsh tone, or a clouded countenance is felt like a wound; and cheerful looks, kind words, and obliging actions are certainly not too great a price to pay for an attachment which we value. Even if it should cost us some self-restraint, there is motive enough, one would think, to induce us to practice it.

II. This leads us to speak, in the second place, of the reasonableness of cultivating this spirit of domestic unity.

1. And the first consideration, which I suggest to this point, is one, the truth of which needs no defending; that, next to a quiet conscience, a quiet home is the principal and most secure resource of every man's happiness. It is that, without which other favorable circumstances of external condition are able to confer a very superficial pleasure, and with which many of them may well be dispensed with. Far 'better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.' It is little even to be the wonder and envy of the crowd, if we know that, when we retire from it, it must be to meet caprice, suspicion, and reserve; and the tasks that await us abroad are not hard to be borne, if we are assured that a true sympathy follows us to our toils, and that affectionate assiduities will cheer our fatigue, and an affectionate pride and joy congratulate our success. Let no man ever willingly think of a happiness distinct from the happiness of his home. The gayest must have their languid, sick, and solitary hours. The busiest must often relax their labor, and there must be some retreat

for them, where they may seek refreshment from their cares, and collect the spirits that disappointments so frequently depress. They who live the most for the public, still live for the public but in small part, and they are apt to find the public service a heavy burthen, which gentler encouragement than that of ambition must furnish the strength to support. He who would secure to himself one place of retirement from the difficulties and solicitudes that certainly await him, and the injustice that probably may, must find it in an affectionate home. And in proportion as we feel our dependence upon it for our own happiness, we ought to feel our obligation to make it happy to others. Do we think that we ought to find there a contrast to the indifference or opposition to which we are liable elsewhere? Let us be careful to exhibit there ourselves the amiable dispositions, of which we expect to experience the benefit Do we own that the least evidence of domestic good-will is important to us? Let us habituate ourselves to the exercise of a watchful, considerate, and ready kindness. Are we aware, that, in anxious or susceptible moods of mind, we are liable to be pained by inadvertencies or omissions, which at another moment would have given us no concern? Let us take it for granted that others are compassed with the same infirmity, and, as we wish it to be tenderly treated in ourselves, be attentive on our own part to cause to appear, in the minutest particulars, the sentiments which we entertain. If, in an unguarded moment, a hasty expression approaching to unkindness should be uttered, it is the best office of prudence to overlook it. 'A soft answer,' said the wise man, 'turneth away wrath, but the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.' A vent once opened, it cannot be known how soon the stream may become a torrent.

2. The consideration, that on domestic unity depends domestic quiet, is not only one of great weight in itself, but

it assumes a high religious importance, when we consider that home is the nursery of every man's religious sentiments. We go out into life to act upon our principles, but it is at our homes chiefly that they are imbibed and cultivated. The world besets us with temptations; and though we by no means leave all behind, when we retire within the domestic circle, we yet escape from many of the most threatening. The world presses us with cares, occupies us with novelties, disturbs us with its follies, and deceives us with its show. If anywhere we can find calmness and leisure for religious self-discipline, it must be at our homes; and if even there our minds cannot be collected and placid, if there too anxieties must possess, and opposition weary us, if there too the conflict with the spirit of discontent must still be carried on, our task is tenfold arduous. It is at our homes, if anywhere, that we read, meditate, and pray; and it is not the least blessed power of a quiet and affectionate home, that it favors these offices of devotion. He is truly to be pitied, not only for the discomfort which he suffers, but for the cloud which is brought over his religious prospects, who finds the influences of his fireside uncongenial with the exercises of his closet; who does not find that spirit excited in communion with his family, which he desires to carry to communion with his God.

3. As it is in the retirement of a peaceful home that all our christian principles and affections must be fixed, so, once more, it is there peculiarly that our benevolent sentiments must first take root, and receive their most important culture. The domestic affections are the most spontaneous of all. It is in the family circle, that the attraction of kind dispositions is first revealed to us; that we first become acquainted with the satisfaction that is derived from loving and serving others, and acquire a relish for it; and it is not to be supposed that the heart, in which the affections of

kindred are cold and feeble, should glow with a more comprehensive charity. We cultivate the benevolent temper by cultivating the habit of attention to the welfare of others; and this habit, like every other, needs to be kept alive by constant exercise, no less in small things than in great. To exist at all, then, it needs to be continually cherished, where most of our time is passed, at our homes; and when it exists in such vigor, as to cause us to be scrupulously watchful there, to communicate pleasure and avoid giving pain, on the most common and trifling occasions, as well as the more important and rare, we have then been through that discipline of mind, which fits us for a more enlarged benevolence; we have a right estimation and true taste for the better feelings of our nature; our hearts are attuned to sympathy with all our kind. Let us cherish the benevolent dispositions at our homes, then, because it is the dispositions which we have cherished there, that we take thence with us to the more public scenes of life. And let us not think it of little consequence to cultivate them even on the least occasions; for the dispositions, in which the trivial concerns of life have left us, are of course the dispositions which we bring to its more important cares, and according as these latter find us in a disturbed or a gentle frame, will probably be the testimony which they will more publicly give, to the advantage or discredit of our charity.

III. Lastly, how is this excellent temper of fraternal unity to be formed?

Passing over more superficial methods, I proceed at once to that which the apostle Peter proposes, when he enjoins on us to 'add brotherly kindness to godliness.' The domestic affections, in their fit purity and strength, are to be built upon and grow out of the religious, as their basis and root.

It is only a sense of religious obligation, and the gentle, but steady power of the religious spirit, which can operate

so constantly, and penetrate so deep, as to secure the performance of those little kind offices of perpetual occurrence, the neglect of which has a most threatening aspect upon domestic friendship and enjoyment. We can summon, from various sources, resolution to perform a single conspicuous act of usefulness; but to a course of duties, whose importance consists in the undeviating regularity with which they are discharged, and the firmly established temper of mind which they indicate, there is nothing but religion able to excite us. If religion be thought the most important agent in preserving the peace of a community, not less necessary can it be to maintain the order of that less division in the social system, a family, where, if dissension once gain a footing, the occasions for it are of more frequent repetition, and where the maintenance of quiet and happiness depends on dispositions lying deeper in the heart, and requiring a far more delicate culture. The domestic affections are in such harmony with the religious, that each is essentially weakened by the absence, and strengthened by the union, of the other. Without cultivating the religious affections, indeed, it does not appear how any one can set a consistent example, or consistently claim to be the object, of the domestic. For with what color can we demand obedience or regard, when we ourselves neglect to render it where it is most due? And how greatly incomplete must be our own appreciation of those good feelings which we affect to value, when the constant kindness of our Father in heaven, awakens but languid emotions in our hearts.

The religious character of a family, is the religious character of the individuals who compose it; and this, no doubt, requires to be in chief part formed by separate self-discipline. Yet I will just name two practices, which are of essential use in cherishing that domestic religion, which is the main security for domestic union and happiness.

The first is, the habit of domestic religious instruction. The communication of religious knowledge, by such means, to the minds of those who are subjects of direct instruction, all important object as that is, is by no means the only object thus secured. The benefit is experienced by the teacher, as well as by the taught. His own religious convictions are made distinct, and strengthened, in the effort to convey them to another mind. His own sense of their worth is exalted, while he considers and urges their importance; and he sees a great added reason for valuing them, when he thinks on the influence, which he hopes they are to exert on the present and future happiness of those to whom he imparts them. A religious man has an additional tie to his home, when it is connected in his mind with those religious thoughts and feelings, which most of all he prizes; and a religious family have a new tie to one another, because to their sympathy upon other subjects, they add sympathy upon that, which interests them most of all. A more complete understanding and confidence than can otherwise subsist, is established between those, in whose mutual communications religion has its proper part. There is nothing which so affects and attaches a devout parent, as the religious promise of his child; and, on the other hand, there is no other emotion of filial love so warm and sacred, as is felt when, in a season of difficulty, sorrow, or temptation, the principle that sustained us, is remembered to have been a parent's lesson.

The other practice, to which I alluded, is that of family devotion. It does not belong to my subject to expound the reasonableness of this service, and urge that they who enjoy blessings in common, ought to acknowledge them together, and that if a family, as well as a larger community, or an individual, has interests peculiar to itself, those interests should be commended to God's blessing in domes-

tic, for the same reason that the others are in public, and in secret prayer. Nor is this the occasion to enlarge on the fervor and pleasure of that devotion, in which united hearts are lifted in united prayers to him that 'maketh men to be of one mind in a house.' I do no more now, than submit to your reflections the thought, what an advantage for cultivating the gentle and generous affections that family must possess, who are in the habit of assembling, day by day, to remember their common necessities and dependence; to acknowledge their common infirmities, and implore the divine grace to forgive and reform them; to think of the goodness of their common Father, the claims of their common Lord, the abundance of their common blessings, and the use of their common griefs. Nothing short of a detailed consideration would do any justice to the extent and importance of the subject. Yet I could not consent wholly to pass it by, in a connexion which so naturally suggests it, and in approaching towards a season, of which we commonly avail ourselves as the most favorable occasion for forming new resolutions, and entering upon the prosecution of new plans of life. The practice of domestic devotion, whenever begun by any family, will probably be begun at some such season as the beginning of a year, in consequence of a previous purpose and arrangement. And greatly should I have cause to rejoice, if it might be the effect of this suggestion, to lead some who hear me to adopt, in an application to this office of family religion, the resolution of Joshua, 'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

Finally, my friends, religion, the great, the universal principle of union, is the main agent in causing brethren to dwell together in unity. There is nothing like religion, to make different minds sympathize, different efforts coöperate, different interests coalesce. If we would be happy in the

world, it must be through her encouragement. If we would be happy in solitude, it must be in her society. If we would be happy at our homes, it must be under her influence. Cornelius is said in the Acts to have been 'a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house.' What a vivid picture of domestic happiness does this simple statement present! Who would not be sure that love and peace were tenants of the dwelling of Cornelius? The affections that belong to the domestic sphere, are indeed well worth cherishing to those, who believe that these few years of life are not to terminate their exercise; that the pure attachments of this world are to be matured in the long friendship of eternity. Godliness claims of the mind which it possesses, to give it brotherly kindness for its companion; and they have a motive to walk within their house 'with a perfect heart,' who believe that, thus walking hand in hand, they shall be, in a better sense than that, in which the words were spoken of Jonathan and Saul, 'lovely in their lives, and in their death not divided.'

SERMON XV.

DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

EPHESIANS V. 33.

LET EVERY ONE OF YOU IN PARTICULAR SO LOVE HIS WIFE EVEN AS HIMSELF; AND THE WIFE SEE THAT SHE REVERENCE HER HUSBAND.

In a course of remarks on the obligations which belong to different relations and circumstances, I could not be justified, if, for any reason, I should omit to consider the duties of a relation, so eminently important as the conjugal; a relation the most intimate which men mutually sustain, and, in the fulfilment or neglect of its duties, involving consequences more momentous than any other, unless we make an exception for that of the parent to the child.

In classing these duties, the most general distinction, which strikes us, is between such as belong to the parties in the conjugal relation severally, and such as belong to them alike.

I. To the former class let us first attend.

1. The distinctive duty of the husband is, a suitable provision for the wife's maintenance.

The indications of providence, which assign to him this duty, are so express, that, though disregarded in the oppressive license of the savage state, in all civilized communities they furnish the fundamental rule for arranging the occupations of social and domestic life. The husband's duty in this respect, along with the reasons on which it is founded, extends to the use of all proper means within his reach, to furnish a competent support, and answer reasonable expectations. He must be industrious, not suffering himself to be incapacitated for industry by intemperance, nor interrupted in it by any other vice, or folly, or care; and he must be frugal in the gratification of personal tastes. The maintenance, which he owes, is due not only to the present time, but, by parity of reason, to the future. It is his duty, not with a discontented anxiety, or distrust of God's providence, but with a prudent forethought, to endeavor that all its resources shall not cease with his own uncertain life. The kind of maintenance, which is to be reckoned competent, and accordingly what a right conscience dictates to be afforded, is to be determined, as in all such cases, by the practice of that rank in society to which the parties belong; qualified, if need be, by the individual's own ability. Without undertaking to meet indiscriminately demands of caprice or ostentation, provision is however to be made, not for expenses of necessity alone, but also, (subject to the limitation just now stated,) for expenses of convenience, of taste, and of charity. And this rule should have a liberal interpretation. One must have little relish indeed for giving way to others, purely for the sake of making them happy, if he is not willing to go thus far, for the individual whom he has chosen from all the world to be his nearest friend. The wishes, which in this respect may be expressed, are not to be strictly, far less to be captiously, canvassed. As such, they claim a respectful

and delicate allowance. In the strength of her affection, the wife has made great sacrifices, for what, with the best prospects, is an uncertain good. She has left 'her own people, and her father's house,' mother, brethren, and sisters, the endearments, and security, and quiet, and independence of the household hearth of her childhood, to go and place her first confidence in a stranger, and assume, for his sake, responsibilities untried and weighty. And it is little for her to expect, that all shall be done, which a ready generosity can do, to lighten her cares, and compensate to her the indulgences which she has forsaken. At the home of another's providing, almost all of her time must now be spent. Should it not be his study, to provide for it every comfort and attraction? She must needs be the partner of his poverty. Is it not just, that she should be the equal partaker of his abundance?

2. The distinctive duty of the wife, on the other hand, is that of obedience; a duty so explicitly, one might say so exclusively, in this relation, inculcated in the christian scriptures, that it would be impossible to pass it by. 'Ye wives,' says Peter, 'be in subjection to your own husbands. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price.' 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,' says Paul, 'as unto the Lord.' 'As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.'

The necessity of such precepts, regulating the wife's duty on the one part, might be inferred from what has been already said of the husband's duty on the other. Divine laws, (nor human either, when they are just,) never impose an obligation, without at the same time conferring the authority, which may be needful to empower one to discharge it. When, therefore, they make the husband responsible for providing a maintenance, they by necessary consequence

invest him with the right of arranging and regulating that provision; which right extends so far among the details of domestic order, as itself to be almost coincident with the right of exercising a control in all things innocent. Again, since, deplorable as that event would be, it is still possible that two separate wills may exist in a family, and since it is impossible that both should go into effect, and since both cannot be maintained without a collision, which will distract a household with the worst disorders, causing children and servants, in the uncertainty where their obedience is due, to give it nowhere, it seems necessary to be determined, by a general rule, which will, in such a possible competition, shall prevail; and in this, as in other cases, the existence of the rule, will, in the great majority of instances, prevent occasions, for its application, from arising. In any community, larger or smaller, equal authority, without a common superior, is the very definition of anarchy; which, though, where good feeling prevails, it may exist without mischief, is, as an institution, altogether an unsafe one to rely upon. And this precedence, so necessary to be established on one part, seems necessarily also to be vested in that party, to which human laws in fact attach it. It is indispensable to be possessed, in the discharge of the duties to which we first attended, as far as these go, which is very far. And, not to suppose any original intellectual difference, providence, in the constitution of the other sex, has removed them from the active scenes of life, and thereby restricted them in the performance of some duties incident to the place of head of a family, and in acquiring that large experience of affairs essential to the best discharge of others. So that, supposing both to have equally good judgment and intentions, he in whom the first trust is actually reposed, seems to be the most likely to be qualified to administer it, the most for the good of all. And though, in many cases, the rule may

operate unequally, subjecting the good and judicious wife to a control inferior to that of her own discretion, yet this is but an unhappiness to which all rules are subject; some protection is afforded against the hurtful operation of this, as well as others, in the circumstance, that the possession of authority tends to create in most minds a sense of responsibleness and justice; and, at all events, there is no alternative, for it would be impossible to make an exception in any case, without bringing back in all cases those evils of strife, which the rule was instituted to abate, since if the one party ceased to be entitled to obedience, as often as the other was wiser and better, what a vexatious question to be agitated, would here be introduced. And, indeed, the cases where it may operate the most oppressively, are the cases where it can least be dispensed with; for a meek and quiet spirit may mollify an angry temper, while opposition would only provoke it into fury, and surely frustrate its own aim.

'The christian scriptures,' says Paley, the great authority of the age in questions of casuistry, 'enjoin upon the wife that obedience, which in the matrimonial vow she promises, in terms so peremptory and absolute, that it seems to extend to everything not criminal, or not entirely inconsistent with the woman's happiness.' Unwilling, however, to impair the force of the remarks I make, by appearing to assume anything on the ground of sex, and preferring therefore to leave that question to the good sense of that portion of my hearers, whose consciences its decision is to bind, I will touch upon it no further than to say, that the obedience due in different relations is a different thing, and that the nature of the obedience, proper to each, is to be determined by the nature of the relation to which it belongs. The submission of a subject differs from that of a servant, that of a child again from both, and that of a wife from all. Nor is anything humiliating implied in the obligation to obey. For the sake

of the great mutual benefits to be obtained by a settled subordination, every member of the community is subject to that obligation in some form or degree; and in the form in question, it might seem less obnoxious than in others, because in this, unlike others, it is voluntarily contracted for, and if a man ought not to marry till he sees that he can maintain, no more ought a woman till she knows that she can obey. Nor is the rule founded, as the brief exposition which I have given of its principles has shown, on any supposition of natural inferiority, moral or mental. Nor, if such a case can be supposed, does it give any right to the preferred party, to presume on the preference, which is vested in him for the good of both. It would be as preposterous in the husband, to be elated by the power which he possesses to cause his will to be regarded, as it would be in the wife, to be boastful of the power which she equally possesses, to consign her husband to prison with the debts of her extravagance. Nor does, I scarcely need say, the rule which requires submission in the wife, at all justify capricious commands, or offensive coercion in the husband. If disobedience is wrong on the one part, doubtless positiveness and unreasonableness are no less wrong on the other. The truth is, the rule is for extreme cases, and a rule for extreme cases ought to be settled and known, because then they are much less likely to occur. The question of authority is one, which in practice ought not to arise. In the family which is governed by good principles, neither will rule in any obnoxious sense; but right reason will decide, and true affection harmonize, the wills of both, and so the one will of both will prevail.

II. We proceed to duties belonging to both parties in the conjugal relation alike.

1. The first is, that mutual fidelity, which is the distinctive obligation of the marriage bond.

If the subject could be pursued, there would be no denouncing in too strong language the flagitious sin, which violates that obligation; a sin, which involves the most odious perfidy, and inflicts the most inconsolable distress, and provokes to deeds of the most desperate violence; the very suspicion of which is fraught with discord and misery, not only to the parties directly concerned, but to unoffending children; which utterly depraves the moral nature, destroying the sense of shame and honor, to say nothing of more spiritual sanctions; and which, if it were to become common, (which every transgressor takes his full share of the wickedness of helping it to become,) would reduce the human to mere brute life. If there are considerations, which seem to give the crime a somewhat blacker enormity in one of the parties to the matrimonial contract than in the other, there are others also tending to reverse that decision; and if it were not so, the comparison would little deserve to be insisted on, since if more or less detestable and mischievous in one, it is sufficiently so in either.

But the fidelity, which belongs to this relation, is of a more delicate kind, than is practised in a mere literal keeping of the seventh commandment. If the affections be suffered to wander, its obligations are not fulfilled, though no charge of unchastity be pretended. Its demands are satisfied by nothing less than a paramount attachment. I do not say, an exclusive attachment. The ties of kindred, though they become subordinate, are not dissolved in contracting those of marriage; there is no such interference between our happiest relations. Nor are friendships forbidden to be maintained or to be formed. But to yield to another the first place, in the affections which have been already pledged, or knowingly to incur any risk of doing this, is undoubtedly a breach of matrimonial faithfulness. The husband or the wife reasonably expects to stand highest

in the regard of the individual, in whom his or her highest confidence is reposed. Whoever, husband or wife, (for though, in the poverty of our language, the words which are used can denote but one, the remark of course applies equally to both,) is obliged to see that there, where his own best esteem is due and is paid, and those requitals which the heart demands are looked for, the opinions of some other are more regarded, and the society of some other is more sought than his own, cannot but feel that a grievous wound is inflicted on his peace, and a heavy cloud has settled on his way. And, unless he have more than common self-command, the irritated expression of this feeling will minister occasion of mutual discontent, and perhaps aggravate the evil which excites it. Though other friendships may be indulged, then, fidelity in this most intimate relation requires that they be kept subordinate to the friendship which this relation implies; and every kind of levity, however otherwise harmless, which might lead to uneasiness or distrust, is, on that account, for duty's and for interest's sake, to be scrupulously shunned. Elsewhere, where in the assuming of the bond in question, inclination is customarily sacrificed to interest, or to what is called duty of some other kind, the lesson to be enforced would be, that, when assumed, it should be cheerfully and honorably worn; that inclination should be forced, and duty made pleasure; and that, as part of the discipline to this effect, all exposures to a transfer of one's first regard, where it was not due, should be watched, and all associations which might tend to this be carefully avoided. And in a state of society, like our own, where there can scarcely be a motive for entering into the relation except from one's own free choice, it still deserves to be remembered, that the affection which was at first spontaneous, is yet liable to perish for want of care, at least that it may be made to suffer from injurious treatment; and

considering how perfectly inestimable its worth is to another and to one's self, there will seem to be a sufficient motive to take pains for its preservation; at all events, not to hazard its diminution, by placing it in the way of any temptations to inconstancy. The expectations of inexperienced youth, in this particular, are sanguine. But novelty, which passes away, has something to do with their ardor; and if happily they are realized in the event, it will prove to be by the help of a maturer wisdom, which takes care to see and appreciate all that goes to establish an effectionate esteem, and avoid all that might distract the sentiments, which it is bound, and which it loves, to cherish.

2. A second duty obligatory alike on both the parties to the marriage bond, is that of uniting their efforts for each other, and for their household, as for the promotion of a common cause.

They are to remember, that, from the nature of the case, they now can have no separate interest; that, in that partnership, whatever benefits or injures one, extends its effects to both; and that, accordingly, whatever motive any man can have to seek his own advantage, the same have they to consult the advantage of each other. Children, property, friends, station, — reputation even, to some extent, for the estimation in which one is held, is partly transferred, and in its customary manifestations must needs be expressed, to the other, — are all a common stock. All then should be a common care too. The labors of the mart, of the field, and of the workshop, should be seconded by the judicious order of the household, and the attention of the one be given prudently to use, what the other is diligently striving to acquire. Both may well give heed to acquaint themselves, as far as may be, with the peculiar cares and concerns of each; not only that they may be ready with all sympathy, but that, on any occasion which may arise, they may be

prepared to make those seasonable suggestions, or propose that intelligent advice, which, be but the needful information possessed, come the most fully and most surely of all, from the individual, who, having interests necessarily the same with our own, is under an equal motive to find for us the true and the expedient. Children are alike the honor or the shame, the joy or the misery of both; and there needs to be the most cordial coöperation in efforts for their benefit, and the freest mutual communication, and weighing of opinions, on the methods in which their benefit is to be advanced. The friends of the one may be more attached and secured, and the consideration in which he is held increased, and his consequence and favor in the world, and of course his advantages in important respects, extended, by a suitable deportment on the other's part. The tasks to which he is devoted, and the plans which he is compassing, may be greatly facilitated by what another can do for him better than he can do for himself; or, at any rate, by what both may more effectually do together, than it could be done by either alone. Whatsoever pursuit occupies and interests one, demands the interest of the other. Advice will be wanted in its perplexities, and encouragement in its ill successes and fatigues, which must be looked for, if anywhere, in the bosom-companion, the sharer of all one's lot, the individual who will sympathize with, (if any will,) and consult for, that happiness, whose sources lie deeper than in any array of prosperous external circumstances; and in truth, there is no benefit which one human being can render to another, so comprehensive, as that of keeping him in good heart for whatever worthy action or service may claim him. An enlightened affection will be solicitous, above all things, for the honor of its object; and honor in the christian sense is usefulness. All his undertakings of usefulness, then, it will be prompt to lighten and forward, by appro-

bation, by encouragement, and by such aid as it may afford; and in their success it will especially rejoice, and feel itself dignified and rewarded. A meet-help, a suitable coadjutor, is the name which the Bible gives to one party to this relation, where first it is mentioned; and, extended to both alike, there is no other name which could better express many of its duties.

What has now been said, my hearers, is sufficient to satisfy us, that the duties of the relation under our notice, are so various and important, as to claim a very serious consideration; and to put those of us, who sustain it, on the inquiry, whether we are endeavoring to meet its obligations with a sufficiently conscientious purpose. What further suggestions are to be made on the subject, I defer to another opportunity.

SERMON XVI.

DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

EPHESIANS V. 33.

LET EVERY ONE OF YOU IN PARTICULAR SO LOVE HIS WIFE EVEN AS HIMSELF; AND THE WIFE SEE THAT SHE REVERENCE HER HUSBAND.

Proposing, this morning, to consider some duties incident to the relation of marriage, we took notice of a distinction, between those which are appropriate to one of the parties in that relation, and others incumbent on both alike. Under the first head were specified, provision for maintenance, as belonging to the husband, and, consequent upon it, as well as for other reasons, the rendering of obedience as obligatory upon the wife. Under the second head, we attended to the obligation of mutual faithfulness, extending to fidelity of the mind, as well as to what is merely personal, and then to the obligation of cordially conspiring with united efforts, in all the tasks and interests of life, as for the advancement of a common cause.

3. I resume the subject by naming, for a third duty under this head, the endeavor to promote, in all ways, the happiness of the person with whom one is thus united.

Next to those of an approving conscience, with which they are strictly in unison, the joys of benevolence, or, as in its most concentrated form we are to term it, of friendship, are the most exquisite which belong to our nature. In the relation now under our notice, excluding all partial interests, forbidding, when sustained in its fit spirit, those occasions to arise, which, with the best management, may become causes of division between other friends, our heavenly Father has taken care, that these enviable pleasures may be ours in their utmost perfection and security. Here is a sphere for the most unlimited confidence to be exchanged. Here, in the established intimacy of daily life, is the most unrestricted opportunity for the thoughts and the satisfactions, and the sorrows, and the hopes, and the fears of each, to be known to each, and corresponding offices of kindness to be mutually rendered; in short, for all services of friendship to be done, its strongest devotion to be felt, its whole advantage to be experienced. This is the privilege of the condition. But if its privileges are not enjoyed, there is no middle ground; it then becomes a condition to the last degree harassing and intolerable. The intimacy, which affords continual opportunities of kindness, affords also constant opportunities of strife, and provocatives, moreover, when provocation has once begun to be given. The joint management of interests, which must continue the same, after it ceases to be the same feeling in both hearts which overlooks them, furnishes perpetual ground of debate. The tastes which do not harmonize, find incessant occasion to jar. The unkindness which in one instance has been attributed, goes to color the construction which is afterwards put on words and actions of daily recurrence. Perceived, or imagined, it is brooded over, or retorted, and has its effect on the deportment, which is itself in turn retaliated, and so on without any limit. Other friends, if cause of

offence unhappily arises, dissolve or contract their relations to one another; or, without an observable interruption of these, in the intervals of their communing together a better feeling is restored. But in the intimacy of the state in question, there is scarcely a medium between concert and collision; between coldness, which is always present to annoy, and an affectionate confidence, which is always near to bless. And when harshness or contradiction await or invade one at the table, and by the fire-side, it is then felt, the most keenly, that they are evils hard to bear.

These considerations do not merely prove what is the interest of the parties to the engagement in question, though that indeed they manifest in the strongest light. They are in place where they are introduced, because, (showing what a peculiarly wide difference is made in the happiness of another person, by its being neglected or discharged,) they show how singularly important is the duty of cultivating in this relation, a constant, and firm, and generous, and delicate attachment. That spirit must not cease to be cultivated, even, (if it be necessary to glance at such a possibility,) after its object has ceased to be worthy to inspire it; unless there be cruelty, or other great and repeated provocation, amounting to a virtual renunciation of the bond. Nay, within these limits, the more it ceases to be matter of voluntary sentiment, the more it needs to be made matter of duty. Happy, when it may be placed on the sure foundation of mutual esteem; and, that it may have that basis to the utmost, it is a duty carefully to observe and ponder, and thoroughly to estimate, everything which is estimable in the partner of one's life, taking pride one's self, as far as pride is admissible, in every praiseworthy quality which is disclosed. Other feelings which may belong to love, are liable to be transient. Without esteem, or in its place, an extraordinary sense of duty, they certainly will be so; but

esteem, where ground for it exists, is perpetually more and more fed and strengthened. Time, which destroys many other things, only matures, and establishes, and exalts this sentiment; and, whatever may be imagined of an affection which reaches at once its height, deserving friends are in fact only the dearer to each other continually, to the end of life.

The desire to promote another's happiness implanted in the mind, it is scarcely needful to specify the forms of expression which it will take. The sentiment, which is energetic and infallible, may be left to itself to dictate these. In the various circumstances of their changing life, they who are united in this closest bond of friendship, will be prompt to offer to each other the aid, and sympathy, and counsel, suitable to each. In sickness, each will be the other's care; in perplexity, each the other's resource and guide; in dejection, each the other's stay. Rich, they will be happy in each other's good fortune. Poor, they will be animated to patience by the view of each other's fortitude. Joys will all be doubled, and sorrows lessened by a free communication. In their own successes, as far as they can be called their own merely, each will hasten to communicate pleasure by imparting them, and receive the congratulation which is ready to be offered; and in successes or disappointments of the other, each will have prompt congratulation to bestow, or a reinvigorating encouragement and sympathy. Conformity of tastes and habits will be studied, even to the abandonment of one's own; for a dissimilarity in these is fruitful in the less occasions of variance. The tenderest regard to feelings, and most respectful consideration for opinions, will be shown. Inclinations will not only be obeyed, but when they may, anticipated; nor will the worth of those little attentions, which, if they prove nothing else, prove what is much, a continually present and active kind-

ness, by any means be overlooked. Each will seek to honor each in other's view, by suitable demonstrations before others of the respect which is entertained. Each will seek to reflect credit on the other by maintaining a worthy character, and even by becoming attention to such inferior recommendations, (for instance, of manners and appearance,) as tend to attract good-will; for the consciousness that what others esteem, is ours, is one which the heart prizes, and to confer this happiness of a gratified and proud affection, is a worthy and a generous aim. The good husband or wife will frequently reflect upon the question, by what change of deportment or habits, happiness may be increased, where most the desire is to have happiness abound. Concessions and improvements which the securing of this object seems to demand, will be cheerfully made. Where intentions and feelings are equivocal, the best, of which the circumstances admit, will uniformly be attributed. Occasions of dispute, anticipated, will be carefully shunned; or, unhappily arising, will as soon as possible be removed, or escaped from; for which is worst, — let any one who will reflect a moment, say, — to provoke a displeasure, or to yield an argument? The most guarded forbearance, and the promptest forgiveness will be extended to infirmities of character on the other part; for none are perfect, and to expect it, would be to brave for ourselves a wounding disappointment. If it be by good principles, for the most part, that that character is controlled, one is to remember that none are faithful to their principles throughout, and to rejoice in the reasonable hope he may have, that those principles before long may be further effectual than as yet they have been; and in the worst event, — if it were otherwise, — if there were no such principles, — then an angry remonstrance would only tend to an aggravation of the evil. Suspicion of affection on the other part is not to be tolerated,

but confidence in it, on the contrary, to be, in all fit ways, both cherished and expressed; for nothing discourages and estranges like distrust. In short, as a dictate alike of policy and of conscience, of interest, and of God, the unkindness of reserve and of neglect, of petulance and of passion, in all their forms of act, word, and feature, are watchfully to be shunned; and each individual, sustaining this great relation, is to find an excellent happiness here, as he may, along with the favor of God, in consulting with unintermitted earnestness for the happiness of another, whose welfare is bound up with his own.

4. Again; among the objects which friendship contemplates, are such as extend beyond the present life. He who feels that our religion is the source of his own highest pleasures, cannot but devoutly wish that his friend may share largely in the same. He who knows that bliss or misery, in an endless life to come, is to be the sure inheritance of every man according to the character of the deeds done in the body, must needs rejoice with joy unspeakable in contemplating the christian virtue, cannot witness without distressing solicitude the spiritual danger, of the individual to whom he is allied in the closest tie of fellowship. If we prize that friendship, the hope must be precious to our hearts, that it may not be of the things which pass away, but may be renewed after death, not again to be dissolved for ever.

There is no more manifest or higher duty of the marriage state, none which a christian affection more urgently enforces, than that they, whom it unites, be fellow-helpers to one another to 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' and to the salvation which that truth brings. A solemn religious responsibility of this kind belongs to that relation. We commonly say, and no one doubts, that we are bound, under the weightiest obligations, to consult for the religious well-being

of our children; and the reason assigned for this is, that we ought to endeavor to make that existence happy, which, under providence, we have been the means of giving. Is there no like reason which obliges us to extend the blessings of religion, as we may, to that existence which we have voluntarily pledged ourselves to endeavor to make happy? — And in a case where responsibility so clearly follows upon power, the power which the husband and wife possess over each other's characters, is scarcely inferior, if at all, to that which the parent possesses over the character of the child. The child, it is true, comes under the parent's management while his dispositions are yet in their most flexible immaturity; but, on the other hand, in the common course of things, it is dismissed from that management into a world of exposure at an early period of life, while nothing severs the other relation in its closest intimacy, but the blow that sends the body, its service ended, to its rest in the grave, and the spirit, its trial over, to the judgment of God who gave it. — And the influences which belong to this relation act with a freedom from some obstructions which hinder them in the other. Childhood and mature life see the same things through different optics. There is an imperfect sympathy between them. The young are apt to reckon mere prejudice and severity, what their elders account the instruction of experience, and the exercise of a mild control; and in the difference of the respective discipline of mind which few and many years have given, parent and child are liable not to be satisfied with the same reasonings, nor impressed by the same illustrations of truth. So far, friends of more equal age have their characters more within the power of one another's minds. Standing in a like position for observations upon the distinctions and consequences of conduct, enlightened by the instructions of a similar experience, and disposed to a similarity of views by all the influences of the

same period of life, one has the greater advantage for leading the other to conclusions to which he has been led for himself. And in the matrimonial relation, the intimacy between such equals is so close as to justify advice, and even expostulation; to disclose fully, under all its aspects, the character which one would desire to improve; to facilitate the constant and seasonable exhibition of example which may be needed; to favor the timely suggestion and recommendation of profitable truth; and to enable one to wait and watch for opportunities which, judiciously seized, will often do at once, what, without them, would cost much time and pains, if, indeed, capable, without them, of being accomplished at all.

This power, husband and wife must with all good conscience use. Affect each other's characters unavoidably they must. In this office, they cannot escape the alternative of doing important service, or contracting heavy criminality. It cannot be, that an agency so direct shall be in operation through a course of years, and no moral results appear. If a mutual love subsist, there will be an effectual power, in solicitations which may be used, in sentiments which may be expressed, in the example which may be presented, in every influence of daily communion. If that sentiment do not subsist, the power will not be forfeited, though then scarcely capable of being employed to beneficial issues; but will remain to manifest a most pernicious efficacy, in the encouragement of all ungentle feelings, and the dwarfing of all growth in grace. It should be our habitual endeavor thoroughly to acquaint ourselves, as we have opportunity to do, with the character which it is our business to correct and improve, with the mind which it is our set task to endeavor to enlighten and elevate. While advice on either part should never be officiously, nor censure assumingly nor offensively conveyed, neither, when it seems that they might be useful,

should be withholden through indulgence to any selfish consideration. The purpose they might serve is too important to be thus sacrificed. But there is to be a patient waiting for occasions when they may be made most acceptable, convincing, and efficacious; the eligible ways of suggesting them are to be studied; and that we may offer them the more graciously, as well as for better reasons, we are to take care to receive them with a mild and ready welcome, when offered to ourselves, and to recognise them then as dictated by the most friendly motives. The truths and the opinions, which we think important, are to be presented to the mind we are concerned for, in the most favorable lights which we are able to command for them. The morals, which passing events afford, are to be extracted from them, in discourse leading to a comparison of the impressions which they make. In every commendable course of conduct, all assurances of satisfaction, and other encouragement which may promise to be best received, are cordially to be offered; and everything, within one's reach, to be supplied, which may facilitate or reward the tasks of duty. The influence, with which the affection, we may have inspired, invests us, is all to be thrown into this scale. Above all, we are to endeavor to approve and endear the religion, whose authority we would extend in the heart the closest knit to our own, by manifesting its power to make ourselves meek and useful, tranquil and devout, generous and happy; and, in united devotions, to commend the relation we sustain, and the great objects we would serve in it, to the blessing of Almighty God.

The happiness and benefits resulting from the relation, when its duties, as they have now been enumerated, are in some fit degree discharged, I shall not undertake, my hearers, to describe; but rather conclude by insisting on the point, that embracing, as they do, the best enjoyments of

the present life, and tending to the supreme enjoyments of the life which is to come, they are only to be reasonably hoped for in cases where the relation is sustained under a scrupulous and lofty sense of duty. Nay, more; the maxims are as true as they are trite, which set forth that the condition of marriage, if not a very happy, will be a very wretched one, which christian patience, no doubt, can bear and sanctify, as it can other evils, but, in enduring which, it finds itself tasked the most severely. And if it be so, what a solemn question is that, to whom we will commit such a control over our present and our future destiny. Can we feel safe in trusting it to any but conscientious persons? Without extreme rashness, can we think of committing our peace for this life, and such an influence over our prospects in the future, to one whom we do not believe to be controlled, at least, by a strict sense of duty, — to intend, under all circumstances, to do the right? The principles which do not yet appear, it is true, may appear hereafter; and it must be owned, that there does seem to be in the female mind, especially, an aptitude for religion, which the nature of domestic responsibilities is seen to have a tendency to develope. And this is to be acknowledged as one of the checks, which a gracious providence has furnished, against what would else be the much wider and more hurtful consequences of human imprudence. But that strong principles will appear, when as yet they have not, is what we have no right to count upon; and unless they should, the prospect, with all things else which may seem to brighten it, is a dark and an alarming one. Some one of my young hearers will object to me, that the affections cannot be forced, and that we cannot dictate to ourselves to love another, merely for being precise and good. I will answer first, that precision is not goodness; and then, that the proposition of the affections being incapable of being forced, (that is, into life and

development,) true or not, is nothing to the purpose. What I am saying is, that they may be restrained and suppressed, and that they ought to be, — and that they must be, at the individual's own most awful peril, — when the person, to whom the affections are in a way to attach themselves, does not manifest that character, which affords a reasonable prospect of being equal to serious duties, and exigencies, and trials. Wit, and beauty, and grace, and talent, and fortune, for example, are all good things for their several purposes. But they can scarcely be called very good even for these, unless combined with something which is better; and at all events, for the purpose now in our contemplation, the securing of happiness in the state of wedlock, all of them united have been repeatedly proved to be of insufficient avail, without the addition of what is now insisted on. Youth is easily attracted, and decided soon. It forgets, that the fanciful preference of a moment may not safely determine the prospects of a life. It is unmindful, that looking to this world merely, occasions will come, for which the graces of the ball-room are no sort of preparation. It rashly takes the eyes which can sparkle in their morning brilliancy, for those which will weep meekly in sorrow, and kindle with a steady encouragement in the midst of care, and hold a light which can cheer when all other light on earth has waxed dim. It is so wild as to mistake the flutterer of the hour, for the same who will be the ministering angel of sickness and decline. It needs to be reminded, that if there is any engagement in life, which is not to be formed under the arbitration of caprice, it is that which is not dissolved, till the parting shall come at the laden bier, and the open grave. It must be conjured to remember, that if there is any step in life, which requires beyond others to be made reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, prayerfully, and in the fear of God, it is that step, which, day by day, is the most inconsiderately taken.

I may be conceived by some to be doing little better than speaking to the winds, while I am arguing with youthful confidence and precipitancy. But let it not be thought so. If youth is hopeful and impetuous, — in very many instances, thanks to the influences of our religion, and the faithfulness of parental care, it is also conscientious and considerate. If I have been offering what, among the different particulars of good advice, is one of the least likely to be taken, assuredly it will not be for want of deserving to be taken; and among those who may now hear and neglect it, there may be some who will hereafter see occasion to call these my words to mind. — I turn from the topic, to ask in one word, whether, with all good prospects for himself, — looking to his obligations to others alone, — any one will be so mad, as, in a spirit of levity, to think of entering on this most serious relation? Will any one think of entering upon it, without first solemnly reviewing the obligations he proposes to assume; without rigorously examining himself to learn whether he is prepared to fulfil them; without fervently imploring the divine blessing to prosper his purpose to be found in all things faithful? And of us, my friends, who already sustain it, will any one fail, in serious self-communion, habitually to reconsider his responsibilities; to reflect on the great results, for evil or for good, which depend on their being slighted or religiously met; and earnestly and frequently to beseech the Father of Mercies, the God of all grace, to prepare us to render our account of this stewardship with joy, on that day when the tenor of all lives, and the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed?

SERMON XVII.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

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1 TIMOTHY V. 8.

IF ANY PROVIDE NOT FOR HIS OWN, AND SPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSE, HE HATH DENIED THE FAITH, AND IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL.

From the connexion, it is very probable that all which St. Paul had in view to express by these words, was, (as is commonly understood,) the obligation to furnish suitable maintenance from day to day, to one's domestic dependants. His language, however, in the period quoted, suggests no such limitation. The first clause might be properly rendered, if any do not take care for his own, — if any be not thoughtful for their benefit; and in this there is no intimation of the care in question being restricted in its objects to their present, or to their temporal interests. If it were not so, the obligation of parents to keep their children above present physical wants, would be extended, by parity of reasoning, to embrace other provisions for their welfare. Nothing can be plainer, than that it is incumbent on them to endeavor to make that existence, which, under providence, they have bestowed, a happy existence. And, to this end,

they are no more really bound to make present provision of food and raiment, than they are to take measures, that a like provision may be permanently made. Nor, since the supply of physical necessities through life, is not all that goes to constitute their children's well-being, would they be discharged of their duty by an exclusive attention to this, however exemplary the attention might be.

I. Of those duties of parents in providing for children, which make the subject now proposed for your consideration, the duty of consulting for their well-being at the present time, is that which naturally first suggests itself.

1. In this is included, as one branch, what has been already hinted at, the duty of maintenance.

Since no one has a right by his own act to cause other innocent persons to suffer, nor to throw upon yet others the burden of keeping them from suffering, the child and the public have evidently a right to demand of the parent, that what he has produced, he shall support. This he must do according to his power, and according to the station which he, and consequently (in some measure) his child, hold in society. And because, and just so far, as he is bound to do this, he is bound to enable himself to do it. It is not enough for him to say that he has nothing to do it with, unless he can add that it is by the act of God, defeating his strenuous endeavors, that he is thus destitute. Idleness and wastefulness, criminal in any one, are ten-fold criminal in a parent. I speak not now of unnatural desertion, nor of impoverishing and destructive vices, which make him the heaviest burden and curse of his own dwelling. But if what should make suitable and reasonable provision for his children, be withdrawn from that use for mere selfish indulgencies of any kind; if the father, whose toils are his children's dependence, be deficient in a systematic and judicious diligence, or the mother be remiss in that domestic

order, which turns what is possessed, little or much, to the best use, there is a worse than infidel hardness there, — there is a heart of stone, where a warm parental heart ought to throb. I may seem often to bring to your notice, my friends, these virtues of industry and prudence, and they may seem not to belong to the most elevated order of subjects. But I have the same notion of religion, which was expressed by an excellent prelate, when he said, that he looked on everything as a question of religion, which was a question of a right and a wrong; and if the topics in question are often brought to view, they are not therefore to be thought the less of, provided this is naturally done, in consequence of any connexion which they really have with other subjects of remark. On the contrary, their importance is only shown the more, by their relations being so wide and manifold.

I remarked, that the kind of maintenance, which it is a parent's duty to afford to his child, seems to be prescribed by considerations of his means, and of the habits of that station in society, to which he, and consequently his child (in some measure) belong. The most affluent can preserve their children's lives on as cheap terms as the day laborer, but to do this would not be discharging their duty, because, being able to furnish some additional present advantages, which are real, it is right that they should bestow them, — the poor are dispensed from doing this by their want of power; — and because the children of the poor, having all that others in like circumstances have or expect, ought to be contented, while the children of the rich, if they want what is commonly enjoyed by others, in like circumstances, with whom they naturally compare themselves, and are compared, are exposed to remark and to mortifications. This principle, so evident as to its grounds, is of somewhat delicate application; and it is not an unheard of complaint

on the part of children, that a reasonable liberality is not shown to them. It is clear that this complaint, except in extreme cases, is always undutiful. It is perhaps not as clear, but it is as true, that it can scarcely ever be safely made; safely, I mean, as to a probability of its being well-founded. Whether a reasonable liberality is shown or not, depends on two considerations, which have been specified. As to both, the parent is the less partial judge of the two, — the child, I do not say from want of affection, but from thoughtlessness, thinking mainly of his own gratification; — the parent, for a general rule, finding his own gratification in all suitable indulgencies to the child. As to one of the considerations, the parent is also plainly the more competent judge. He better knows what is his place in life, and what are its real demands and decencies. And as to the other consideration, that of his ability to meet the wishes of the other party, he is the only judge. His child, under misapprehensions of this, which he is very likely to take up, and can scarcely ever have a reasonable assurance that he has not taken up, may suppose him to be niggardly, when he himself knows, that, in an earnest desire to be generous, he has been intrenching on the limits of imprudence.

Having made this remark, let me proceed to another, for the use not of children, but of parents. For the reasons which have been stated, children cannot make a good use of it. Parents possibly may. — It is this; that it is a very misplaced and pernicious economy in parents, when, either for the sake of greater accumulations for themselves, or for the more specious reasons of enriching their children the more hereafter, or teaching them betimes how to live upon little, they unnecessarily straiten them in their expenditures, so as to create a perceptible difference between their appearance, and that of others of like condition and age. Too often this course has been known to tempt to, what I need

not say it by no means excuses, petty dishonesties; and except in very happily constituted natures, its tendency is to form a servile, inefficient, dependent, artful, unmanly character, or to be succeeded by habits of a desperate profligacy, when wealth and free agency, with all their untried responsibilities, come at length to be enjoyed; — or what, incongruous as it is in theory, is not unknown to experience, to develope both these wretched classes of propensities in the same individual.

2. This obligation of providing for the maintenance of children, I introduced as one branch of the more comprehensive duty of consulting for their welfare for the time being. Their happiness, it is evident, does not depend alone on such provision being made. A captious and severe parent will be felt to have left much undone for his child's enjoyment, whatever care he may have taken for supplying him with shelter, food, and raiment. But parental love, as a principle of constant kindness, does not essentially differ in its manifestations from the affection that belongs to other relations; so that it will be sufficient to have named it here, as what ought to be the established and all-pervading spirit of intercourse, prompting the parent, as far as may be, to do all favors, allow all indulgencies, and practice all forbearance, (consistent with the child's permanent well-being,) which may go to make its early life a morning of unbroken sunshine. And indeed that parental affection, which is so universal an instinct, that the apostle had good cause to say, that whosoever showed himself destitute of it was worse than an unbeliever, and scarcely could claim to be called a man, — that parental affection, I say, is an instinct so strong, that there is more frequent danger of its misdirection or excess, than of its absence. Its due guidance and limitations belong to the subject of the proper conduct of the education of the young. As to its vigor and habitual exer-

cise, which alone present themselves in this connexion, it may be enough to say, that these are chiefly threatened by unevenness of temper, and by partiality. There are persons, of truly warm attachments, but irritable feelings, whose prevailing disinterestedness is felt by their friends to be scarcely more than a requital for the pain, which at times their uncontrolled passion inflicts. And let him, who would be a really kind parent, take care to regard all his children, as nearly as possible, with an equal affection. Let him seriously strive to do this, and if still he fails, still let him strive to conceal his failure. Let him admit no preference; but as long as there is a preference unsubdued, let it be disguised, for it will be felt by sensitive natures to be a cruel wound.

II. A second part of the provision due to those of one's own house, respects their means of living for the future; in other words, what is commonly called their establishment in life.

While a parent is not to suppose that he is doing everything for his children when he amasses a fortune for them, and while, on the ground that charity begins at home, he is not to assume that it also ends there, it is his duty to endeavor to make such provision for them, (proportioned, as before, to his power, and to the place which they are to hold in society,) as shall give them a reasonable prospect of ease and independence in their future circumstances. And especially will he be anxious to do this in the case of children, who, from infirmity of mind or body, disadvantage of sex, or other like cause, have less capacity of providing for themselves.

But, my friends, assuredly we should do little for our children, in the way even of securing them from want, if we were to do no more than leave them enormous fortunes. The only capital, which can be placed for them in anything

like a secure investment, is what we deposit in their own minds. Nowhere, does it need to be urged on a person of any observation, that riches have a tendency to take to themselves wings, and fly away; least of all in a community, whose institutions, leaving everything accessible to individual talent and enterprise, favor this tendency, as ours do. An experienced person, tracing in his mind his child's future path among the chances of life, cannot fail to see how uncertain is his permanent hold on what he may take up at its entrance. He knows that, with good management, unavoidable mischance may deprive him of what a parent's providence has long been storing; and that ignorance, or carelessness, to say nothing of profligacy, almost certainly will. Apart then from the obligation of service to the public, the rich do not their duty by their children, in respect even to their future maintenance, by bequeathing to them the most splendid estates, unless by bringing them up in habits of discretion, and instructing them in something, which if need should come, may be turned to a gainful use, they invest them with the power to preserve what they may possess, or to retrieve their fortunes, should any reverse befall them. And to insist on this being done, should such urgency be requisite, is an occasion that calls for the exercise of a decided parental authority. In all the common chances of life, the rich young profligate will either die young, or die a beggar; and though inexperience and incapacity without vice are less threatening, there is danger enough in them to call for a parent's best precautions.

What is the duty of the rich in this particular, is, for reasons which are perhaps more obvious, though they can scarcely be called stronger, the duty of all others. He who sends a child upon the theatre of life without the disposition and the capacity to get his living, — and, by the disposition, I mean a readiness to labor steadily in something useful,

and by the capacity, a knowledge how something useful is to be done, — he, I say, who sends a child upon the stage of life without this preparation, not only takes the risk, greater or less in different cases, but great in all, of throwing a burden on the public, but, (a consideration which perhaps will touch him nearer,) he is exposing his child to very probable misery. Without any exception this is true. And every parent is deliberately preparing to consummate this sacrifice, who, without earnest remonstrance, or without exerting to the utmost the authority and influence which belong to his relation, sees his child growing up in habits of vice, or of hurtful or unprofitable self-indulgence. 'His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not,' is one of the severest reproaches of parental unfaithfulness; and they are making themselves, or preparing to make themselves, vile, even in the world's indulgent esteem, as surely as, in youth, they are either doing amiss, or doing nothing. On the contrary, they are assuredly making themselves honorable, whatever now their station, if they are going through the discipline of a diligent youth. More ambitious hopes a fond parent need not indulge, in a country where, as with us, the prizes of society are free, than that his child may be industrious in qualifying himself for the tasks of manhood, and then have his life and health spared, to profit by his acquisitions.

As to the kind of establishment for children, which ought to be desired, there seems to be a reasonable check to a parent's undue ambition for any, in the improbability that he would be able to exalt, alike, all those for whom he ought to feel an equal concern. If a remarkable success should elevate one far above the rest, the world would call this splendid, but the parties concerned would be apt to find it uncomfortable; and a rupture of the union, or of the perfect sympathy of the whole, would be too dear a price to

pay for the uneasy exaltation of an individual. Advancement above the sphere, into which one was born, may be reasonably sought; but respectability in that sphere, which is more certainly attainable, is enough for a good mind to be contented with; a wide removal from it, if attained, is always an experiment upon happiness; and the ambition after such change, if immoderate, is always liable to be attended with painful disappointment. The great objects to be regarded are, the security of happiness and of virtue; and the considerations, which belong to these, make place for an enlightened discretion. Criminal employments are of course not to be thought of. Employments attended with any uncommon temptations are to be shunned; and the occupation, to which a young person shall look forward, is to be determined with some reference to his own character, as far as that is developed, the selection, which demands to be made, being of such as will find use and excitement for his characteristic good qualities, and restrain, or at least not call out, his bad. Whatever will help him to be virtuous, will help him to be happy. But his happiness is also involved in other considerations, which therefore, according to their respective importance, claim a distinct regard in making this choice. Considerations of health and of situation are to be admitted; and here too, while a parent's better knowledge and experience give him in some respects a great advantage for deciding what will make his child permanently happy, the child's well-ascertained and fixed preference, on the other hand, is entitled, in its due degree, to regard, since the disappointment of a taste which itself, unfortunately, is not the wisest, sometimes leads to unhappiness, and so to other evils, greater than would have been likely to ensue, had the taste been gratified.

I have only further to suggest, under this head, that the leading remark is not intended to have exclusive application

to those young persons, whom the task of earning a subsistence most commonly awaits. It seems equally a duty so to educate young persons of the other sex, that they may be able in some way to maintain themselves with dignity and independence, should circumstances ever bring on them that necessity.

III. But, thirdly, a person may have an abundance to live upon, and yet be exceedingly far from happiness. If a parent had done all which as yet has been prescribed, and with the greatest success, still he might have sent his child into life with a certainty of being very unhappy there; because he might have sent him thither unworthy of that good-will of others, from which many of our enjoyments, to be possessed by us at all, must flow, and incapable of those highest, those indispensable enjoyments, of which a man must carry the spring within himself.

Let us take care, my friends, according to our means, and the measure of a reasonable judgment, and in the communication of powers of action, which we hope and endeavor that they may have good sense and good principle to use well, to give our children a fair prospect of wordly prosperity. We shall thus convey to them what is a real good. We shall give them advantages, and furnish them with a degree of defence against temptations. But let us not dream, that, in doing this, we have made for them all the provision which is due from us. If they continue to be what the world calls prosperous, they will want for their happiness something, which is much beyond this, and possessing which they can never in any reverses be utterly forlorn. We carry, after all, the sources of most of our happiness along with us. The enjoyments which flow from these are heightened or impaired by outward circumstances, into which we may fall. But without them, no auspicious concurrence of outward circumstances can give real satisfaction, and with them no severity of fortune can take it wholly away.

Apart from the approbation of conscience, my friends, which in itself, and its foundation and consequences, is undoubtedly the one thing needful, (apart, I say, from this, which in fact is so inwoven with the whole subject, that at almost every point it is interfering with my endeavor to exclude it from present consideration,) how much is there, that goes to make a man happy, of a nature to be furnished to the child by a provident parental care. To impart the power of getting money, is certainly not the only object, even of a discipline which looks not to the higher objects of education. I might here very properly speak of the obligation of parents to take due precautions for securing to their children the great blessing of a sound body to be the clothing and instrument of a sound mind, and by denying them unreasonable indulgencies of ease and appetite, and by other suitable regimen, to prepare them to undergo hereafter fatigues and exposures, which may belong to some place of duty. And indeed when one considers, how helpless a being the best-principled invalid is often compelled to be, and how much trouble he must needs occasion, cheerfully as that trouble may be borne, and how much in fact the functions of the mind and the soul are concerned with those of the physical system with which they are united, there will appear cause for saying, that the care of health, undertaken for reasons of conscience, comes as near to the character of an important virtue, as anything which does not commonly bear that name. Again; to what wearing weariness is the man condemned, who has nothing to do; and while we all feel, unless we are shameless, that a fair standing with others is a desirable addition to happiness, how little is he, who does nothing, esteemed or cared for. Fill a man's coffers with treasure, and his pulses with high health, and what a dull blank may existence yet seem to him, and what a duller blank in existence may he yet see himself to be.

My friends, who have reached the period in life which I am addressing with these counsels, we have all experienced, in some degree, either the torment of the want, or the worth of the possession, of some fit employment for our time; and, in either of them, we have had a better lesson than words can impress, of the obligation of anticipating for our children these demands, these necessities of the mind. If it is probable that their future lives will be passed in the labors of some useful calling, very far are they from being unhappy in this, and on it we may well place our chief dependence for their living contented and esteemed. But then we shall do well to inspire them with a taste for the exercise and cultivation of their minds. It will protect their leisure from bad uses, and occupy it well. It will give them added dignity and happiness, in whatever station. It will increase their means of making others happy, especially in the domestic sphere. It will enlarge their power of using opportunities to advance themselves. It will elevate their nature. For those, whose prospect of exemption from gainful pursuits promises them a more unbroken leisure, the necessity is greater of forming a taste for intellectual pleasures. Not only is the express responsibility on them, to feed high the intellectual flame within them, that it may enlighten all around, but in great part, in a taste for intellectual pleasures, they absolutely need to find their moral security, and their daily enjoyments. Nor are accomplishments of a more superficial nature by any means undeserving to be comprehended in the scheme of a judicious education. They enlarge one's means of commanding and imparting pleasure; and one of these is a benevolent aim, and both are worthy ones. They add to the number of innocent uses of time, which might else not be so profitably spent. They impart a certain delicacy to the mind. They sometimes afford means of adding to its stores, and they

may afford it excitement and help in what are its more appropriate and graver exercises. Only scrupulous care is to be taken, that an unreasonable importance be not attached to them by the young mind, nor an undue attention given; and that they be not disproportioned to other advantages, which the individual enjoys, nor unsuitable to his probable future condition in life.

Adhering to what seems the spirit of the apostle's declaration in our text, I have endeavored, my hearers, in the suggestions which have been offered, to confine myself to considerations of a parent's duty in providing for his children the various subordinate means of happiness, for the present time, and for the rest of life; not touching, (since it is a topic worthy of distinct consideration,) the obligation of training them to those sentiments and habits of religious goodness, without which whatever else may be done for them is almost worthless, in any view or for any use. This could not with propriety be added as a separate division of our present subject, because in fact, when considered at all, it incorporates itself with each of those that have been treated. If we have succeeded in inspiring our children with love to God and man, in exciting in them a relish for the pleasures of devotion, rectitude, and self-government, we have then consulted, the most effectually which is possible to us, for their immediate enjoyment; for their eligible establishment in life, which, in common circumstances, is a prize for the attainment of their own virtues, and a gift of that favor of others, which their virtues are the surest way to win; and for that happiness in their coming years, which must needs be affected mainly by the moral bias of their minds to good or unworthy objects, and not inconsiderably by the estimation in society, which this will tend to bring. I therefore separate the topic from those which have been discussed,

only saying, in conclusion, what will not be questioned, that there is in truth no other provision for his own, which it is so solemnly incumbent on a parent to make, as that of the love of duty. And if he be negligent of this care, the apostle's language is to him language of most manifestly indubitable truth. Well may he be called worse than an infidel, who, turning a deaf ear to the cry of his child's want, does violence to an impulse of nature, which the most uninstructed and undevout acknowledge. But with an added force of application, does the falsely called christian parent entitle himself to the name, who abandons his child's immortal part to famish and die. The infidel, in doing this, denies no faith. He knows no better, or at least he is consistent. But the parent who professes to believe, that for those he professes to love, the question of a blissful or a wretched futurity is suspended on that of a godly or a wicked life, and yet pursues no settled purpose of determining that issue for them happily, what character will he venture to lay claim to, on the ground of the provision which he is making for his own?

SERMON XVIII.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

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1 TIMOTHY V. 8.

IF ANY PROVIDE NOT FOR HIS OWN, AND SPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSE, HE HATH DENIED THE FAITH, AND IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL.

ATTENDING, on the last Lord's day, to the obligation of parents to provide for their children's well-being during the period of pupilage, to provide for their suitable establishment in life, and to provide for their possessing the power of being useful, and resources for being happy, when the sure lapse of time shall commit them to their own care, we purposely reserved, for a distinct consideration, what it was suggested is a provision involved in all, going further than either, and requisite to make the rest effectual; the provision of a moral and religious discipline. We endeavored to limit our observations before, to advantages of condition, which parents should aim to furnish, and accomplishments of the mind. Our concern is now with the formation of the character, the training of the heart. Our remarks on this branch of the provision, which parents are bound

to make for their own, may be conveniently arranged under the following heads;

I. Its nature.

II. The spirit in which it should be made.

III. Its worth.

I. Of its nature. — A moral and religious discipline, that is, a discipline designed to form the character to all virtue, will be conducted by instruction, affecting directly the principles, and, by various influences, aimed directly at the practice.

1. The object of instruction is, to settle right principles of action in the mind. Principles are what we are most of all to depend upon. Principle will act, when and where authority will not. Principle is always present with the agent, to exert a control, when he who else might assume authority, is not there to interfere; and principle can regulate that, of which authority is able to take no cognizance, the state of the thoughts and inclinations, which always are the rudiments, and many times are the substance, of virtuous and wicked conduct. Principle, when it is fit to be called such, is much stronger than example, and is continually seen to contend successfully against it; besides that principle can guide in cases, where no example is to be had, and the highest characters aim at a sphere, which is above all example but Jesus's own. Again; principle, operating in suitable conduct, is character itself, whereas authority, and example, and others, are only influences, under which principle, and thereby character, may come to be formed.

Now principle is a guide not more for the advanced in life than for the young, though, as we advance in life, it is reasonably expected to become more enlightened, and so more discriminating, and more firm. In a very young mind, it is possible to give that delicacy and power to conscience, that it shall feel no punishment more than its own reproaches,

nor be more excited by anything than by its own approbation. That due care consists in judicious and full instruction. In judicious instruction, which habitually analyzes the character of conduct, and explains to the satisfaction of the child's mind, from the time when he begins to reason, the right and the wrong that belong to it. To do a parent's duty well in this respect, one should be a clear, and to this end he must be in some degree, a profound, — at least a careful, casuist; and though this is not a common attainment, it is only through negligence that it is not, for every one who has had a parent's experience of life, is able, if he will give his mind to it, without the aid of books, to assign their real character to most actions of common occurrence. For want of such pains being taken with them through the period of pupilage, many children grow up with no precise, that is, with no just views of what duty is; while, on the other hand, let them but be encouraged and aided in such inquiries according to the measure of their growing capacities, and one is astonished to see what an appetite and what a facility for it they develope. Nothing is more striking than the aptitude of the young mind, with a little help, to make just and nice moral distinctions, which, if made at a later period, when the mind has been through the blinding and distorting discipline of selfish life, pass for the attainment of an uncommon wisdom.

We observed, that that instruction, which communicates the principles of right conduct, needs to be full, as well as to be distinct. It needs to be full in respect to the demands of duty, and in respect to the grounds of its obligation. As to its demands, they claim to be exhibited in their whole extent, as set before us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we profess to desire, as our highest object, to bring up our children to be subjects of God's favor, then surely nothing, on which God has declared his favor to depend, can safely

be omitted from our notice. And if it were not so, if there were one so blinded as to think of nothing but providing for his child so much virtue as would best serve his purposes in this world, let him be assured that all virtue hangs together; that all good dispositions and habits of the soul have a mutual dependence; and that if, in thousands of cases, the experiment were tried of making a man sober, honest, and kind, without the help of the fear of God, in the thousands of experiments there would not be one result, of anything beyond the most imperfect and unsatisfactory success.

Once more; instruction concerning duty is to touch the grounds of its obligation. We say, my hearers, that we have told our children that this action ought to be done, and that to be forborne, and that having thus instilled into them good principles, we feel a confidence in committing them to the exposures of life. I make no doubt of the power of their principles, remaining in due force, to protect them. But let me ask, what is to protect their principles? Have you made sufficient provision for this? If you have, it has been by a care excellently well bestowed, but a care which has cost you no little thought and time. Those principles, on which reliance is to be placed for the future course of the young, are themselves to be guarded by a perception of the authority on which they rest; by acquaintance with the evidence, the sense, and sanctions of that law of God, of which the principles of duty, as they are called, are but the transcript in the individual mind. The time will come, when the parent's authority will not alone, on such a subject, be enough for conviction; and requisite provision for the hazards of that time is only to be made, by acquainting the child's mind, during the period of instruction, with the proofs on which the christian revelation rests; expounding to it in some detail those affecting truths of the gospel, which have such power to recommend themselves; and, by those

expedients, which a religious affection is so fertile in inventing, leading it to discern and relish the beauty of christian holiness. The young mind must be interested in christian truth, before christian principles can be said in any proper sense to be fixed in it. And this is not to be done by merely placing it within hearing of the preached word, or presenting the page of scripture to its notice. The truths there written will be best enforced by communications from the parent's own mind, which, to communicate them well, must be pervaded and warmed by them itself.

2. Principles of due purity and strength, established in the mind, are doubtless more effectual to the end in question, than any influences operating directly on the practice. Yet these are by no means without their importance; and chiefly, because by them good principles are recommended to the adoption of the mind, and bad principles are prevented from acquiring a power, or strengthening or maintaining it, if unhappily acquired.

The most important of them is example. And although happily, when opposed to established principle, it has to yield, it is of such consequence in inculcating principles, that the best inculcation of them without a corresponding example, is commonly of no avail; or to speak more properly, when good principles are enforced by words, which cost nothing, and bad by actions, which are always a sincere language, the latter is the more forcible inculcation, and prevails. In extreme cases, indeed, there is an exception to this. A man's vices may be so evidently odious, as strongly to repel. The libertine, for instance, may enforce his lectures on sobriety, by the spectacle he presents of the ruin which deviations from sobriety will bring. But no one, certainly, would wish to deter his children from sin by exhibiting himself to them as a specimen of its mischiefs; and, stopping anywhere short of this, — resting at any point where

he retains some portion of their respect, and so of power to influence their minds, — his example of transgression speaks louder to them than his commendations of obedience. It is to no purpose, my hearers, — we speak to the wind, — if we extol to our children the excellence of self-command, and then they see us self-indulgent. It is in vain, that we tell them of the obligation and happiness of loving our neighbor, if they never know us to be consulting, nor making sacrifices, for others' good. We had better be silent, and save our credit with them for sincerity, than discourse to them on the pleasures of devotion, while all our conduct, and all the rest of our conversation in their presence, betray a worldly, or a careless mind. And, on the other hand, the exhibition of a godly, righteous, and sober life is a perpetual and most moving enforcement of its principles, while they are not expressed in words. When they see him living on them, children are sure that their parent has been sincere in recommending principles, and truly values them for himself. They are grateful, instead of being weary, when they find him earnestly intent on communicating what they know that he heartily prizes. Be his example good or bad, they insensibly follow him; and if it be good, the happiness, which they find in imitating it, disposes them favorably to the principles, which are known to be its guide. There is not a dictate, which a genuine parental affection more loudly utters, than that of setting to children an example of a virtuous life.

Authority is another influence, which a parent is entitled and bound to exert over children for their good. It is true, that authority cannot take the state of the mind under its immediate regulation. But still it has an important sphere in the determination of character, inasmuch as it may obstruct or favor the formation of habits, which have a powerful reaction upon principle, whether for good or for evil;

and it may remove the young mind from exposures to temptation, and subject it to external influences favorable to its virtue. I cannot, by a direct exercise of my authority, compel my child to love truth, or to be peaceable; but I can place such discouragements on his practice of disingenuousness, or indulgence of anger, as may probably prevent single offences from growing into inveterate habits, which, once formed, would soon lead to an utter depravation of principle in these respects. I cannot, by an exercise of authority, compel my child to love God; but I may prevent him, for instance, from such an impious use of the Lord's day, as would serve to harden him in impiety, and I may procure his presence at those services of devotion, which, by God's blessing, may religiously affect his mind. Authority is not so much an instrument for attaining what we aim at in this case, as a remedy or preventive of what must be shunned, especially the latter. But still its province remains a large one. Nor are we to understand authority, as if it were altogether coercive. It does not belong to authority, to be a resisted influence. Often the will of the parent will, as it should, be made readily, and cheerfully, and gratefully, the guide of the child; and then it has its happiest, widest, and most directly and thoroughly effective exercise. But, when there is occasion for it to assume a stronger tone, that tone it must assume. For his own good, and for society's, divine and human laws have committed the child to parental care, — that is to say, have made parental faithfulness responsible for him; and he must not be suffered to go on to harm himself or others, for want of a discipline, sufficiently, according as the need is, peremptory, or even severe. 'His father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so,' is the record of the early life of that son of David, who grew up to be his own ruin, and his father's bitter sorrow.

The most definite among the kinds of influence, to be exerted in conducting a religious education, have been specified. There remain others, which it would be in vain to undertake to particularize, in anything like a complete enumeration. Among situations, for instance, in which, by the express decision of his parents, or as a consequence of other arrangements of theirs, a young person may be placed, some will be more auspicious, or more adverse, than others, to his religious well-being; and a most serious regard is to be had to their tendencies of this kind. His companions, and his books, of the selection of both which, parents may and should take cognizance and care, will exert a very powerful influence on his mind. The pains which a parent takes, in exposing to a child's comprehension the good and bad immediate results of his own or of others' right or wrong conduct, are never lost; and the very tone, and expression of countenance, with which, in the freedom of fireside discourse, the judgments and feelings of a good mind are expressed, have themselves a contagious virtue, to possess the youthful listener with the love of truth and goodness.

II. We proceed, in the second place, to some consideration of the spirit, in which that provision for a child, of which we are speaking, the provision of a moral and religious discipline, ought to be made. And, to this point, I know not what more comprehensive and exact rule could possibly be given, than that which we find in the apostle's words, where he says, 'Parents, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' The spirit of a religious education is not to be stern and vexatious, but a spirit of love and tenderness.

1. Not that we are, by any means, to infer from this direction, my hearers, that no violence is to be done to a child's wishes, nor the risk of exciting its displeasure ever

to be taken. Such an indulgence, as we have had occasion again and again to observe in the course of these remarks, would in the end prove to be anything rather than kindness; and, thus construing the former clause of the precept, we should make it impossible to pay obedience to the last, which enjoins, that children be reared up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nay, such a pernicious indulgence infallibly defeats its own aim. To place no restraint upon a child, to attempt to gratify all its caprices, is a sure way to keep it in a state of continual provocation to wrath. The experience of such indulgence does nothing more surely, than teach self-indulgence, which is the parent of all uneasiness and discontents. It seems strangely to be a secret from some persons, but a truth undoubtedly it is, that to make a child habitually impatient and wrathful, and therefore of course unhappy, the specific is, to let his wishes be a law. That most intolerable nuisance to others and burden to himself, a spoiled child, is no other than an indiscreetly indulged child. The deference, which has been shown to him, has made him proud on his diminutive scale; and pride is the most irritable habit of the mind. Unused to having his desires denied, he has no motive to attempt to restrict them within any limits. Unrestricted, left to a perfect license, it is plain that they will soon and continually extend themselves to objects, which it is not possible they should attain; and the disappointments, which must come, and which will in such a state of mind come far more frequently, will be much more angrily resented, when indulgence has been a habit, and has come to be looked on as a right. Let no parent think of showing fondness for a child, by an indiscriminate acquiescence in his wishes. Dissatisfaction and ill-temper, if liable to be produced by causeless opposition, are at least produced by foolish indulgence quite as often. Nay, thoughtless indulgencies directly lead to

irritating denials; and the parents, who find themselves compelled to take the harshest measures, are generally those whose plan it has been, to be all obsequiousness to their children's will. The course they have pursued, has encouraged an exacting and refractory spirit, which, when at length it exceeds all tolerable bounds, requires to be checked by measures of severity; measures, for which occasion would never have arisen, if the reins of a steady authority had not been resigned. For another reason, the parent who at one time is injudiciously compliant, is likely to be the same, who at another time will correct in severity and anger. Both are natural expressions of the same feeble, the same irresolute or inconsiderate character. Hurtful fondness is but one form of self-indulgence, which quality is always liable, as circumstances may direct, to take the different form of passionate displeasure.

2. But, while the mischiefs of indiscreet indulgence deserve to be guarded against with the utmost care, too much pains cannot, on the other hand, be taken, to impart instruction, and conduct parental discipline, in an evident spirit of gentleness and affection. To provoke a child to wrath, to displeasure, is so far to awaken a prejudice and repugnance against what is taught or enjoined; and thus to frustrate one's own end. A stern, an absolute, or even a reserved demeanor, is a great obstacle to the success of endeavors to recommend the qualities which one prizes and exemplifies. *How many virtues you make me hate*, was a natural and just expression of the effect which is produced on a young and undistinguishing mind, by the view of real worth in a person of formal and austere deportment. Yet more is done, to connect painful and repulsive associations in the youthful mind, with the duties which are urged upon it, when in the process of such inculcation, it is subjected to needless privations and restraints; and many can trace ill

influences on their character, (in relation, particularly, to their interest in religious truth,) to errors of this nature on the part of those who meant them nothing but good. Still greater are the mischiefs of an undue severity in correction, or of a habit of captious and sharp rebuke. They create an opposition, which it is beyond them to subdue. The impression once fixed in a child's mind, that he is unjustly treated, and discipline, from the quarter to which he ascribes injustice, will thenceforward do him little good. Unless very young, he has a perception, when it is under any excitement, that he is corrected or reproved; and he has an instinct, that tells him that he has no cause to place confidence in a person under the influence of passion. He regards his monitor as being depressed, under that influence, to his own level; as being no longer more than an equal, with whom he may contend. For the sake of preserving his authority, therefore, as well as to be sure of the sound exercise of his judgment in this important office, a parent needs to resolve never to undertake to correct his child in a moment of excited feeling. No good can come of it; and, very probably, much harm will. It is a great mistake, none can be greater, to suppose that even unwelcome exercises of parental authority must needs provoke the subjects of it to wrath. On the contrary, nothing can be more certain, than that needful severity may wear a mien of perfect self-collectedness, and of kind concern for their good, which will soothe and inspire with confidence in the very moment of coercion. It is the appearance of anger, which excites opposition; which irritates, and estranges. — And the habit of frequent reproof has so far the same effect, that good judgment seems to dictate that some minor faults be for a time overlooked; at least, that some things, which might be wished different, but which only interfere with the convenience of others, be passed over in silence, and the

parent's animadversions be restricted to what injuriously affects the character of the child.

3. Let tenderness be the spirit of discipline, then, that an intractable opposition may not be awakened, nor angry passions provoked, nor confidence alienated from the parent, nor repulsive associations attached to what is in itself so good, nor the inculcation of virtue and religion made to lose, through an unskilfulness in the method, any part of those advantages which are so justly its due. But I apprehend that the principal reason has not yet been given, why kindness, — I will say, after the remarks which have been made to restrict my meaning, why indulgence, — ought to be the pervading spirit of intercourse with children. I apprehend that the uses of a gentle spirit, in the conduct of the discipline in question, are not to be spoken of as negative, or instrumental merely, consisting in the prevention of adverse influences, which would obstruct the object we are contemplating. I know of no more direct end in education, than to bring into exercise, the sentiment of affection in the child; and providence, in fact, seems to have made the most careful arrangements for drawing this forth, in the utterly helpless condition of early life, calling for tenderness to be constantly exercised, and thus making gratitude, and a sense of dependence, the main ingredients of the earliest consciousness. How little do some understand what they are undertaking to regulate, when, simply by a summary and rude coercion, they expect to put in order the delicate mechanism of a human mind. What have I gained, if through fear of myself, or under any other impulse of such a nature, I have made sure that all that the world can see of my child, shall be what I could wish, — if I have made him an automaton, to move as I shall touch the springs, — what have I gained, I say, if, while I have done this, I have failed to give him right affections, and affections strong in

their rectitude? What rather have I not lost, — it may be feared, irrecoverably lost, — in depriving him of the capacity of a moral energy of his own, of the encouraging consciousness of a spontaneous virtue, and of the sense of a higher responsibleness than what he is under to me? No, my hearers; but open the fountain of love in your child's bosom, and you have not only the strongest hold on him for whatsoever further you desire, but you have already the very spirit of all religion and goodness, in action. Religion is love. Love to God, and to men, are its two fundamental commandments. That spirit is what makes a child or a man, a noble creature. Without it, he is grovelling. Excited in your child, it will still need regulation, for hurtful fondnesses are corrupt forms of love. But that regulation you will take further care to give; and, till the spirit is excited, whatever else may have been done, has been done to very little avail. How is it to be excited? Harshness will expel it, and supply its place with that bad brotherhood of ungentle passions, which, as various occasion determines takes various forms, not only of what is violent, but of what is unmanly and mean. A stern demeanor, nay a cold one, will stifle it; for youthful hearts are tenderer than ours, and it needs not a stormy repulse to drive them back wounded, into their melancholy solitude. Neglect of the interest that spirit would testify, or rejection of the confidence it would repose, leaves it to die a slow death. How is it to be excited? Not certainly by an indiscriminate indulgence, which, as we have seen, leads to a widely different result from what it professes to propose; but still by making the spirit of all intercourse, by deed, and word, and aspect, a spirit of indulgence, within all reasonable, that is to say, within all safe bounds; a spirit of affection, which attends to the child's wishes, respects its feelings, welcomes its confidence, and, in short, habitually shows forth, itself, that

sentiment of quickened and disinterested love, which, while it is too true to its own character, to sacrifice important interests of its object to those which are inferior, still manifests that even interests and wishes of inferior importance, are not beneath its notice. Let this be the spirit of a conscientious parent's treatment of the child, for whom he desires the best and surest good, because the way in which affectionate sentiments are insensibly inspired in one mind, is in requital of the same sentiments experienced in another; and there is not a more active affinity in nature, than that by which the spirit of love, which, under its proper manifestations, is, as has been said, the spirit of Christ's religion, communicates itself to a kindred bosom.

SERMON XIX.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

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1 TIMOTHY V. 8.

IF ANY PROVIDE NOT FOR HIS OWN, AND SPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSE, HE HATH DENIED THE FAITH, AND IS WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL.

UNDERTAKING, this morning, to consider that provision, which a parent is bound to make for his own, in training them to usefulness and happiness, by means of a moral and religious discipline, we proposed to arrange our thoughts, under the heads of the nature of that provision, the spirit in which it should be made, and its worth. As to its nature, we saw that it consists in instruction, directed to the establishment of just, thorough, and operative principles of action, and in authority, example, and other influences exerted directly upon the practice. Its proper spirit we perceived to be a spirit of condescension, encouragement, and tenderness; not degenerating into a weak compliance, which, in addition to its more immediate ill consequences, always ends in frustrating the very object at which it aims; but giving to instruction the best chance of a favorable reception into the young mind, forbearing to excite that

opposition, which, rising up against an offensive exercise of authority, defeats its best-meant attempts, and, above all, awakening, by a natural sympathy, that spirit of love, which is the life and soul of excellence.

III. We are to conclude the discussion of the subject, by a few remarks, at this time, on the worth of this part of the provision, which a parent must labor to make for his own.

1. And first, we may observe, that it is altogether indispensable to the adequate making of that provision for their comfort at the present time, which in a former discourse engaged our attention.

We own, my hearers, that it is our duty to consult for our child's happiness during the period of his dependence upon us. Try the experiment, or but consider the case, and decide if anything will go so far towards doing this, as to lead him, in his earliest days, along those ways of wisdom, which are rightly called ways of pleasantness. We speak what is true, but not all the truth, when we say that a parent is not faithful to his children, as to the provision demanding to be made for them, if, through undue care for their present enjoyment, he obstructs their ultimate good. This statement, while it admits that regard to eventual good must preponderate, when it requires the sacrifice of immediate pleasure, still recognizes them as presenting themselves in opposition and conflict; when in fact, in any wide, that is, in any just consideration of the subject, they are not, nor ever can be, so presented. A child, as well as a man, is a responsible being. He is liable, at a tender age, to experience the good and ill consequences of good and faulty conduct, in the esteem and favor, or, on the other hand, the dislike and privations, which they will respectively bring on him; still more, in the approbation or reproaches of the monitor within, the peace and cheerfulness, which naturally attend on the consciousness of pure and generous motives,

and the gloom and restlessness, which cloud and vex a mean or malignant spirit. There is a joy in the very doing of a right act, and a pain in each transgression, independent of that reflex act of the mind, which either applauds or rebukes them; and the life, which is made up of a succession of these sensations, according as they are of the one character or the other, is at first, as well as at last, a happy or a wretched life. Yes, my hearers, think not that to persevere in a methodical discipline, directed to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is to provoke them to wrath, or depress them into gloom. It is through the unskilfulness of the discipline, if any such effect appear. Think not that to leave their feelings unrestrained, is to procure them pleasure. It is the one sure way to mar it. The best child, and of course I take christian goodness for the standard, the best is the happiest child. The most cheerful young person will be found the same with the most dutiful, and affectionate, and, according to his years, devout young person; and the parent who should simply wish to make sure of his children's enjoying themselves from day to day, would even on that ground find the most absolute obligation upon him, to train them to the power of self-command, and to the sentiment of love to God and to their associates.

2. The same will appear, without any extended illustration, in reference to the second particular of the temporal provision due from a parent to his own; namely, provision for their suitable establishment in life.

Fortunes are what profligacy may soon squander; and, indeed, the greater they are, the greater so far the temptation to profligacy, and the more urgent the need of the safeguard of good principles, lest they should be squandered, were this all. Talents, besides that they are a provision which parents cannot make, — when they are seen to be

put to an unprincipled use, only excite the greater dread, distrust, and opposition; and the public distrust is an obstacle to his advancement, stronger than any man, with any talents, can promise himself successfully to contend against. Information and skill, which are capable of being imparted, are doubtless strong agents of worldly prosperity, in the proper hands; but when suspicion attaches to him who would profit by them, they are divested of much of their usual efficacy. And so of address, and of other external accomplishments. They are excellent additions and aids to a good character, but, in connexion with a bad one, will scarcely yield any of what pass for substantial worldly benefits. Besides all which, the very virtues of diligent use of time, of forbearance from wasteful indulgences, and of integrity, which is the wisest policy, have no such trustworthy foundation as in christian principle; and that favor of other men, on which every individual's prosperity is wisely made in no small degree to depend, is so surely to be won by nothing else, as by the unostentatious exhibition of a worthy life.

Were the question then asked me by any anxious parent, what he should do to establish his child well in the world, I would say, for a fundamental rule, bring him up in the fear of God. Make him, if you can, a devout, and so an honest, kind-hearted, and faithful youth. Thus apprized of his obligation to administer well his stewardship of the faculties and opportunities which God has given, and of his obligation to do his full part for the happiness of his friends, and of all men, you have made sure of the great thing, his own strenuous exertions. You have made sure, as far as may be, that he will not be turned from his prosperous course by what are so often the ruinous vices of youth; but, on the contrary, will pursue it with the immense power of a clear, sound, and hopeful mind. And you have made sure, as far

as in you lies, that having, for his irreproachable course, every one's good will and word, he will have too, as occasion offers, every one's helping hand. There is, in the first place, a good disposition to encourage merit. But besides, what may seem more to be depended on, it is for men's interest to do it. A peculiar state of things may for a time create an exception. But, for a general rule, there are tasks of usefulness and advancement enough in an active country like this, waiting for those, whose faithfulness to others' interests, men know that they can trust; and in all cases, of whatever kind, where a desirable event to one individual, depends on the personal preference of some other, all persons, it may be said, who are capable of conferring a real benefit, are powerfully influenced to that preference by a perception of worth of character, and will in no case permit themselves to dispense with it, whatever other claim, or cause for partiality, there may be.

3. Again; as to the temporal provision which it is our duty to make for our own, we are bound, as was remarked on a former occasion, to do what we may, towards making the life which has been bestowed by us, throughout, a happy life. The child, whose character may yet be our formation, whose dispositions may yet be checked or drawn out, and led into a permanent bent, by influences going forth from us, — nay, whose mind is continually receiving sentiments and principles by direct transmission from our minds, — whose habits are daily moulding into a shape of stubborn fixedness by our example, (it may be, our unconscious, and, by ourselves, unwatched example,) — that child is directly to be beyond our control or protection, perhaps beyond our view. Our days will have been numbered, or, if not so, we shall have no longer a right to interfere with him, but by our advice, or for him with other men, but by our persuasions. What is it, by which his happiness, when we can no

longer take any, or any but the most imperfect, care of it, — what is it, by which his happiness will then be far most materially affected, whether for good or evil? I find no room to hesitate in saying, that it is by what we are doing for him now.

A few years hence, perhaps, in the near prospect of separation, we shall be disturbing ourselves about the question, what are to be his future fortunes in the world. It will be to no purpose that we entertain this anxiety then. We can do no more for him then, than leave him with our helpless prayers to the care of a good providence. Our departure, indeed, makes little difference as to the decision of the question. We could do next to nothing then, towards determining it according to our wishes, if we should live. Our wisdom would be to bring it now solemnly to our minds, while we are able to do something, to do much, for its happy solution. Our child is to go from us, whether we live or die, as surely as time continues to move on, till it has made a few steps further, — is to go from us on the theatre of exposed and responsible life. We are not to suppose that all men will feel for him as we do. The world, we may trust, will not treat him harshly, but it is to be expected that it will treat him no better than justly. We are pained, when we think of his meeting with reproach, and enraged opposition, and wounding indignities; but if he deserves them, what is then to save him from them? And if it were through our fault or remissness, while yet we might have made it otherwise, that he was trained or left to deserve them, does not the blame come back upon ourselves? Is there not a weighty sense, in which the opposition that will assail him is our act, and the pain he suffers from it, our unnatural visitation? Or suppose such evils come on him without his deserving them, does not all our strong sympathy dictate the wish, that, under such trying circumstances, he may have all

supports, which are availing and accessible? And what are those supports, except such as we ought now, by anticipation, to be providing for him, the supports of a good conscience, a trust in God, and a hope of heaven? And suppose that he meets with no such trials, still it is likely that he will have his share of others, which belong to the common lot, disappointments, sickness, bereavement, and solicitude; and then every feeling which we have, that we would be prompt at his side, if we might, for all offices of friendship, dictates to us, if we will interpret it attentively, to attach to him, while yet we may, the effective and never-failing friend, that will do all for him which an angel could do, if we could give him a guardian angel always to attend his steps, — the spirit of confiding resignation to God's holy will.

We would ask for our children, my hearers, — it is an instinct of a parent's heart, — we would ask for them an eminently prosperous life. Let not our feeling for them foolishly expend itself in wishes. Let us take care for putting them in possession of what in their behalf we so desire. It pleases God to call for our agency in giving them that which is to brighten the brightest, and cheer the gloomiest lot; nay, with which there is joy in the darkest passages of life, and without which, what we call prosperity has little power to impart a pleasure. To say no more of the religious spirit, as an armor against many of the evils of life, and a balm to assuage the keenness of the rest, the disposition to useful activity which it creates, and the estimation which the exercise of this disposition brings, are themselves far the greatest blessings attendant on the happiest fortune. An unprincipled man is his own cruel enemy; and what we speak of, as prosperous circumstances of his condition, are in his hands but so many added powers of action, with which he only afflicts himself the more. A man without the feel-

ing that he is responsible for making a beneficial as well as harmless use of his prosperity, is none the better for it, but the contrary. His mind pampers and wears upon itself. What others, looking at him, call a condition of ease, he finds to be a condition of restlessness and disturbance. It would be happier for him to be pressed by some wants, which should impel his spirit to some action. Usefulness is the spirit of prosperity, which gives prosperity a title to its name. He is the enviable prosperous man, who, in a conscientious use of his good fortune, gives a happy action to his own mind, enjoys his generous feelings in largely promoting others' good, and feasts upon the cordial offering of their well-earned respect and gratitude. He, and no one of a different spirit, is the enviable and happy prosperous man; and the parent, who, in providing all other prosperity for his children, has failed to make that provision without which prosperity is no blessing, — it needs not be said, that that parent has fallen short, by a wide distance, of his aim.

4. Confining our attention, then, to the several objects which a parent's affection bids him contemplate for his child, in relation to the well-being of the present life, we see that no one of them is capable of being secured, but through the instrumentality of a religious discipline. But, in so saying, we have told but a small portion of its worth. A young mind is an immortal essence. What we call a child, is a being that is never to die, nor ever, through endless ages, to lose its present consciousness. The principles which here it imbibes are seeds, which are to bear their ripening fruit through the perpetual season of eternity.

We see, my hearers, — observation of our own, and the recorded experience of the world has shown us, — that we have, to a great extent, the worldly destiny of our children in our hands; that, in great measure, according as we are now faithful or not to our parental duties, is their prospect of

future happiness and honor, or misery and shame in life. Is it not equally true, that to us is committed the solemn trust of an influence over the character of their prolonged existence in the coming world? No doubt, God will make more equitable allowance than men, for disadvantages under which our unfaithfulness may have placed them. But, (not to say that this is no justification to us,) is anything, that we do not see, more certain, than that condition hereafter is to be determined by character formed here; that the righteous and the wicked mind, is, in the life to come, as well as in this, to work out for itself results of happiness or woe, only with far more directness, certainty, and power, and over a far greater extent of operation? And is anything else more certain, than that among external influences, which go to fix that moral bias of the mind, the strongest may be a parent's? Is there any doubt, that, whatever God's mercy may do for him, in consideration of his unhappiness, if so it be, in having been committed to us, — is there any doubt, I say, that if our child be early taken from our care, the character which he carries to judgment, (his inherent capacity or incapacity for happiness,) will be essentially our formation, as far as earthly influence has been concerned? And if he be spared to years, when he will be capable of spiritual provision for himself, and subject but to his own control, still is there any doubt, that the bias, early given to his mind, will continue to be a great blessing or calamity, furthering or hindering his endeavors for himself; and even if, by a singular vigor of his own, and a special grace of God, he should succeed in releasing himself from toils of bad principle or practice, in which our negligence had suffered him to be bound, still can this seem any extenuation of our sin in the hazard to which we had exposed him?

No, my hearers; there is no such thing as overstating the importance of a parent's faithfulness to his child, as a

religious being. Among all commissions for mutual service, I cannot see that God has committed to man any trust, in which results more momentous are involved. When I think of the consequences, which, by strict, and all-embracing and irrevocable laws, inevitably follow on good and bad qualities and conduct, — the long, and still lengthening train of consequences, which are to attend on them through the successive years of this, and ages of the coming life, — when I think that the mind thus makes, or rather is, a world to itself, and that the unformed mind is for a parent's forming, — it seems to me that he who is invested with that trust, cannot be warned to be faithful with too solemn an admonition, cannot be conjured to be faithful with too earnest an entreaty. I hear you speak, my friends, of the responsibility of a minister of the gospel, and I humbly trust that I am not insensible to its greatness. But in regard to its relation to any individual mind, I hold it to be almost unspeakably little, compared with the responsibility of a parent. For a parent has authority over his child. The mind, which is given him to influence, is in the early and flexible period of its formation; a blank page, for him to inscribe, almost at will, with fair, or with frightful characters. His relation inspires deference, and may be made to ensure assent, to what he teaches. His vigilance is almost always present, to be adapted to varying circumstances. The benefits, for which a constant reliance must be placed on him, and the gratitude they excite, favor a ready reception of his sentiments and counsels; and his example, such as it may be, is an influence in almost perpetual exercise. And then, to repeat it, the mind which he is thus forming, is no less than an immortal existence, about to be entrusted with the present and final determination of its own lot, as far as it remains undetermined under the parent's care. In such a case, it seems scarcely necessary

to insist on the christian obligation of fidelity to a high trust; or to urge the solemnity of the engagement expressed in the baptismal rite; or to enlarge on that appeal to the profoundest emotions of the heart, which lies in the very words, — a parent's love. It would seem enough, to address one's self to the most superficial sense of the common duties of humanity, and ask on that ground, whether any one could think of permitting the obligations of such a trust, for consequences affecting another through time and through eternity, to be slighted, or to be ill discharged.

To ask of you but one moment more; — if a parent's duty calls for such cares as these; if the very claim of humanity will not be silenced, while they are disregarded; if, without them, the very ends for which the parental relation was instituted, fail of their accomplishment, and the natural sentiment of parental love does not perform its office; then, my friends, there is much discipline, to which we must subject ourselves, in preparation for extending its benefits to our children. Those principles which we would communicate, we must adopt, and possess, and comprehend, and act upon. Those applications of them which we would recommend, we must have considered. That foundation on which we would establish them, we must have approved on our own examination. The example, by which we would influence, to which we would attract, that example, of course, we must set. The authority, which we would discreetly and prosperously exert, we must qualify ourselves for exerting, by our personal culture of the evangelical spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Finally, that wisdom and that blessing from above, which we shall find that we want, to guide and prosper our exertions, that wisdom and that blessing we shall see cause, in an exigency so urgent, to supplicate in habitual and earnest prayer. We

must be very good christians, — we must be enlightened and experienced christians, — to be such parents as we ought; and if there were no other motive, where there are so many, to excite us to become so, this alone might deserve to be accounted motive sufficient; for if parental cares be prospered for us, there is no one, in the enjoyment of any other happiness, whom we shall see much cause to envy. There is little which he needs care to add to his possessions, who sees the minds, which he has reared, an honor and a blessing to the world. But it is only a foretaste of his reward, which he is yet enjoying. If there is any proportion between future recompenses, and the amount of good which here has been conscientiously done, the religious parent of a religious child would seem destined to a high eminence in the world of bliss; and the joy which, above all others, a christian parent's heart would be prone to covet, is that, which he may trust awaits it, of a renewed and inseparable union with a child, exalted through his instrumentality to the company of angels.

SERMON XX.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

EPHESIANS VI. 2.

HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER, WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

In the latter clause of the text, St. Paul, as is well understood, refers to a peculiarity in the manner of enforcement of the fifth precept of the decalogue, found in its being sanctioned by the promise of a blessing to follow on its observance.

It deserves also to be remarked concerning this commandment, that it stands at the head of the laws of the second table, as they are styled; that is, those which, in prescribing social duties, duties which man owes to man, are distinguished from the four commandments of the first table, which relate to the service due immediately from man to God. Its claim to that place of eminence, where it is found, may willingly be conceded. Of all our relative duties, that which we owe our parents is, in some sense, at the foundation. It is first in the order of time. The filial relation we assume, the moment we are in existence; and

it is the only one of immediate interest which we do then assume. It is, for a time, the highest of all in importance. It is that, on which the continuance of our existence depends; for if our parents were unfaithful on their part to the duties it implies, negligent in the care it devolves on them, we should not live a day. It is the basis of that parental authority, by which, in infancy and childhood, is impressed on us the obligation of keeping the other commandments, and by which most men are trained up to virtue, who are trained up to it at all. And as the filial is the first important human relation which we assume, so the observance or neglect of its duties affords credible augury of the manner, in which the other relations of life will be sustained. The affectionate, obedient son bids fair to be a faithful husband and a kind father, a constant friend and obliging neighbor, an indulgent superior and honest agent; and even if that be no better than a fiction of philosophy, which traces the origin of civil government to the parental authority, still thus much may be predicted with no little confidence, that the undutiful child will make a refractory subject, or a turbulent citizen.

The duties of children towards their parents, of which I am to-day to speak, while in many respects they continue at all periods the same, are in some respects modified according to the age of the former. In the first years of the life of the child, the office of his parent is that of a complete guardianship; not indeed an absolute, unlimited authority, as it has sometimes been misunderstood to be, (for instance, in the Roman law, which gave the parent power of life and death over the child,) but an authority extending to everything except the destruction of life, happiness, or virtue. The good of the child requires that he should be subjected to such a control. The informed and practised discretion of his natural guardians must make up, for a time, for the

want of it in himself. He must do right at first from implicit obedience, in order that he may do right at last from judgment and from habit. The state of things is considerably changed, when he has attained to an ability to judge and provide for himself, and has come in his turn to assume the trusts and various relations of society. Part of the parent's office is then fulfilled, and ceases; and with it ceases the dependence of the child. The head of a family is not required to consult his parents respecting its regulation, nor has a public officer a right to be decided by their discretion, in what manner he shall execute his trust. As long as we are subjects of education, we owe our parents implicit obedience, because without such obedience, education cannot be effectually carried on. As long as we continue under their roof, we owe them obedience as members of the household of which they are the heads. When, in the natural course of things, we are of an age to be dismissed from their discipline and protection, and become, as the phrase is, our own masters, we are no longer required to be absolutely governed in our conduct by their pleasure. That responsibility for our actions, which, while we were yet in our pupilage, rested with them, our natural governors, then is devolved on us; and as we must act for ourselves, we must, in the last resort, judge for ourselves. But, altered at this period as in some particulars our duty towards them is, still important duties remain to be fulfilled. We still owe all that consideration to their opinions, all that sympathy to their feelings, all that regard to their inclinations, all that indulgence to their weaknesses, all that assiduous exertion to the promotion of their happiness, which are due to the kindest and most generous benefactors we have ever known; and though their will is no longer what it once was, our law, it ought to be a cherished and anxious purpose of our minds, to consult and fulfil their wishes. Are they poor? There

should scarcely be a desire nearer our hearts, than to minister to their support and comfort. Are they in obscurity? However they may seem to others, we at least are bound to honor them. Are they solitary? They have a right to our society and attentions. Are they slandered or wronged? We are their vindicators. Are they sick, afflicted, aged? We should never be missed at their side. We should not leave to others the truly filial task to dry their tears, and sustain their failing steps. Where shall they look for such services, if not to their children? and who, like a child, can soothe a parent's grief, beguile his long hours of infirmity and pain, and make his sinking heart elate and happy? Even the ingenuous young person, who honors his parent by a prompt and confiding obedience, is not a sight, on which the eye of God or man rests with such profound complacency, as he who, arrived at maturer years, and busy with the cares, or distinguished by the honors of society, turns back to bend in affectionate reverence before the hoary head of the benefactors of his childhood; to uphold the tottering limbs that in their manly vigor bore his infant weight, and gladden the aged heart that had so often trembled and throbbed and bled for him. And scarcely is there a feeling, with which an approving conscience rewards the good man so richly, as in the recollection, that by his dutiful care a parent's fireside has been cheered, a parent's wants supplied, a parent's infirmities sustained, a parent's sick bed watched, a parent's dying blessing faithfully earned, a parent's grave peacefully made.

Happy beyond all the happiness, which the gains of a busy, or the frivolities of a gay life can afford, he who can thus acquit his obligations to the benefactors of his earlier years, by the devoted services of his ripened life. But the number of them to whom the lengthened years of their parents permit this enviable privilege, is comparatively

small; and it is to those therefore who are yet the objects of parental tutelage, that the text chiefly addresses itself. My young friends, there is, to say the least, no subject, which is more appropriate to your age, and scarcely any which has a stronger claim to your attention.

I. The precept enjoins on you that you honor your father and mother; and this means, first, that you should entertain in your minds, and show in all your conduct, a cordial respect for them.

You should on no occasion suffer yourselves to forget, that you are bound to treat them with a studied deference. Nothing is more beautiful in a child, and nothing more sure to attract the approbation and good-will of all who witness it, than an unassuming, respectful demeanor towards his parents; as, on the other hand, scarcely anything is more offensive in your age, than a bold and forward, or still worse, a wilful and petulant deportment. If it were only for their superiority over you in years and station, this would be enough to give them a title to your respect. Reverence for age has at all times been reckoned a duty; and the wantonness, which does violence to that sentiment, is one from which every good heart revolts. But it is not only that your parents are older than you, and that they have that information, that experience of life, and that standing in society, which you want, — that they are superiors, and you inferiors, — it is not only on these accounts that you owe them respect. God, in giving you to them, has constituted them your governors and guides; and he calls on you to regard them in that character, and to consider them, in that character, your superiors, no less than on account of their greater experience, knowledge, and dignity. It is not necessary that you should regard them with awe, far less with dread; but it is your duty to look up to them with reverence; never to let the familiarity, in which they may indulge

you, degenerate into rudeness; never to reply to their rebukes in the indecorous language of discontent and anger; above all, never to be guilty of the impious wantonness of diverting yourselves with any peculiarities, which may belong to them; but on the contrary, by your modest and respectful behavior, your unassuming and courteous language, your cheerful and grateful deportment when praised, and your penitent submission when reproved, by asking for what you desire with humility, and submitting to the denial of it without complaint, to show that you understand how venerable is that relation in which your parents stand to you, and how becoming in you is that honor which they claim at your hands.

II. Honor your father and mother, in the second place, by confiding in them.

There is no way, in which you can more easily and fully satisfy your parents that you honor them, than by entrusting to them whatever concerns you; acquainting them with your hopes and disappointments; informing them who are your companions, and what your amusements, and submitting to them your little plans. What person is there, think you, to whom you may tell your secrets so properly as to a parent? Who is there, that will take so true an interest in what interests you? Who will be so likely to advise you right, and who will so cheerfully assist you in any innocent undertaking you may propose? Why should not your parents know who your associates and what your amusements are, when they can have no other desire than that you may be happy, if you can but at the same time be innocent? Go to them then without reserve, as to your most attached, and at the same time most judicious friends; and show that you honor them by reposing in them an unlimited trust. There is nothing that goes further than this, towards making the connexion between parent and child happy. Never let

any other confidant take the place, in your hearts, of that safest and most affectionate confidant, a parent. It is all a delusion if you do so, as will sooner or later appear, to your deep regret. A child is in the way to remorse and shame, as soon as he has secrets which a parent may not know. The false friend, in whom he does trust, can have no good design, in persuading him to withhold his confidence, where nature and manifold added obligations have made it due. Expect no blessing on a purpose, which you determine to hide from your parents. Above all, never let the thoughtlessness of youth permit you to withhold anything from them by any dishonest means. Shun this, as your most fatal snare. The child who begins with the practice of deliberate deceit, — it is fearful to think where he will end. If you love your parents, take it for a rule, that in no other way can you make them more happy, than in letting them see that you are ingenuous; that you love truth. Whatever fault you may commit, you can scarcely commit any of so high a character, but that the pain your parents will feel, in knowing that you have been guilty of it, will be greatly alleviated by finding you frank enough to confess it, and greatly aggravated by seeing you resort to hypocritical arts of concealment. Believe me, my young friends, — and if I could persuade you to receive but one lesson at my hands, it would still be this, — that falsehood is not only the meanest thing in the world, but that artifice and disingenuousness in a child are the sure presage of all baseness in the man, and love of truth in a child, the almost sure promise of a noble, generous character in maturer life. Practice the first, and who will be so vile as to esteem you? Practice the last, and where will be the man high enough to look down upon you?

III. The apostle, who wrote our text, specifies a third way of honoring your father and mother. 'Children obey

your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.'

I have hinted at the leading reason, why you ought to obey your parents; because you are entrusted to them by God above, in order to be formed by them for usefulness in this world, and happiness in the world to come. For this reason he has implanted parental fondness in their hearts, so that, though it costs them much pains, expense, and anxiety, many toilsome days and wakeful nights, they are yet willing to control and instruct you. And for this reason you are made weak and dependent on their care, in order that, even if you are perverse, they may be able to maintain the requisite authority over you. It is needless for me to prove to you, that it is your duty to render them obedience, or that you are pleasing in the sight of God and men when you do it, and displeasing when you do it not. This you all understand and admit. You have learned it in the earliest instructions you remember to have received from your parents' lips. You have learned it further from the peace of mind, the lightness of heart, you have always felt when you have been dutiful, and the shame and remorse which have invariably punished every instance of disobedience. But I would impress on you, that your obedience ought to be prompt and consistent. Why would you be backward to obey your parents? Are they likely to command anything, which is not for your good; or how are you more likely to do yourselves a harm, than by disobeying them? Think it not enough, then, to do as you are positively directed, or avoid what you are strictly charged to abstain from. Be not content with obeying, merely because you are afraid to do otherwise. This is a mean motive, and shows that you respect and love your best friends, as little as you are inclined to be guided by them. But let their wishes, once expressed or even understood by you, be your

rule. Their task is hard enough, however dutiful they may find you. Much as you may second their efforts, by a ready submission to their will when declared, you little think how many gloomy moments of anxiety they suffer, lest their cares for you should after all be defeated; lest the temptations of a more exposed age should undo their work; lest the bad dispositions they have been endeavoring to repress, should spring up again, and the good principles they have been endeavoring to infuse, should lose ground as you grow older. Do not add to their already severe task, by your own intractableness. Lighten it, by furthering, all in your power, their affectionate designs and wishes for you, by your docility, your desire to be directed, and willingness to be reproved. Not only never disobey, but always obey with an instant assent, and a placid countenance. This will not only render your own course easier, in saving you from that severity, which your refractoriness would make necessary, but it will make you the delight and pride of your parents, and still more will encourage them in their arduous undertaking of forming your character, and thus tend to make you better while it makes them happier. And it will excite in them a sentiment of confidence in you, than which nothing can be more gratifying to your honest pride of character. They will be sure that they need not keep a jealous watch over your conduct, that they may venture to trust you out of their sight; for that, obeying in the spirit you do, you will obey out of their presence, as faithfully as before their eyes. It may well be a cause, — I should not say of pride, — but of generous satisfaction to a child, if this is the light in which he knows he is viewed by his parents; if such is the undoubting reliance, of which he has made himself the object on their part. What nobler object of ambition can any one of you propose to himself, my young friends, than the reputation of being one, whom his

parents can fully trust, and be as sure of their injunctions being followed in their absence, as if they were watching by his side?

IV. Honor your father and mother, in the fourth place, by consulting for their happiness by all methods within your power.

Besides that most direct way of making them happy, that of letting them see your own dutiful deportment and worthy character, there are others of perpetual occurrence, too various to mention, but which you will be at no loss to discover, when you are properly impressed with the duty; and no child, who is old enough to understand the duty, is too young to be able to fulfil it. Have their happiness at heart, you will find abundance of expedients of your own to promote it. Not a day passes, that does not bring opportunities of rendering them at least some trifling service, which, if it have no other value, has that of showing your good-will; and to be shown this alone, makes them happy. You may be always saving them expense by your prudence, and trouble by your inoffensive behavior. If you are on the watch for opportunities, much earlier than you have perhaps supposed, you may begin to make yourselves positively useful, to an important extent; and the smallest services you render, will be sure to have a double value in their eyes, for having been rendered by you. How proud is that parent, who is able to show his friends, that trusts, which others are obliged to commit to more experienced mercenary management, he is able to repose in his children. As soon as they have taught you to pray, you should express your wishes for their happiness, in supplications for them at the throne of grace; and if there be any prayer likely to ascend with special prevalence to the mercy seat, well may it be believed to be that, which is offered by youthful piety for the protectors of its helpless years.

V. Once more; honor your father and mother, my young friends, by a character of early piety.

To see you respectable, useful, and good, is the consummation of all their labors, sacrifices, and wishes for you. It is an abundant recompense for all their anxiety, and will cause their grey hairs to descend in peace and dignity to the grave. In no way can you render them a more distinguished honor, for in no way can you bear a louder attestation to the fidelity of their parental cares, than in showing, by your own religious life, that you have been amply profited by such cares. Your virtue will do the best honor to your father and mother, for it will be reflected on them. It will cause all, who see your worth, to mark them as persons deserving that high encomium, of being faithful to their parental trust. All will say, that they took seasonable care to fix in the minds of their children, the principles of integrity and religion. How commonly do you hear it inferred, concerning a person of eminent virtue, that he must have been well brought up; and on the other hand, how naturally does the suspicion arise, when you see a man whom no one esteems, that his parents were negligent or faulty in his early discipline. Be careful, my young friends, to save your parents from this disgrace. Be ambitious to confer on them this distinction. Beware of doing them that great dishonor, of causing your vices to bring suspicion upon them. Take heed, by your blameless and religious lives, to signalize them by that title, which they feel to be so eminently desirable, that of parents of excellent children. If you honor them, show your respect, — if you love them, testify your affection, — by causing them to see, that they are honored by those whom others honor, that they are beloved by those whom others love, whom God himself loves; by giving them satisfaction in your conduct in life; by saving them from apprehensions for your eternal fate. The credit

and the feelings of them, to whom you owe everything, are in your hands. It is for you to honor them by your virtues, or shame them by your sins. There is no indignity, which so burns and rankles in a parent's mind, as the reproach of the crimes or follies of them to whom he has given birth. There is no glory the world can give, like that reflected on him by the virtuous and religious character of a child. And if there be any moment, at which a religious parent's heart dilates with the proudest satisfaction he may ever know, at which he feels that he has become possessed of a distinction beyond which the world can bestow none more enviable, it is that, when he sees the children, whom a few years since he brought unconscious infants to the baptismal font, to pray that the shepherd of souls might receive them into his fold, now coming to take their places by his side at the sacramental table of their common Lord. There is only one place, where he would more desire to meet them; only one, where their presence would be felt to confer on him a truer and more grateful honor; — and there they have already given him a well-grounded hope that he will meet them in due time, — at the right hand of an approving God, in the company of the just made perfect.

SERMON XXI.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

EPHESIANS VI. 2.

HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER, WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

HAVING attempted, this morning, to explain the duty, which is enjoined by the apostle in this precept, I proceed, at this time, to some considerations designed to recommend and enforce it. In other words, having pointed out how children should honor their father and mother, I am now to show why they should so honor them.

I. I may observe, then, in the first place, that a parent has a right to such honor from his children, as has been described, founded on the relation itself, in which he stands to them. In consequence of that relation, an obligation is devolved upon him to provide for, to protect, and to educate them. For the faithful discharge of these his duties, he is responsible to society, and to God; but, in order to be able to discharge them, it is necessary that he have a claim to the submission of his children. They must so honor him, that he may have them under the direction of his authority; may be able to cause them to act according to his own

judgment. Manifestly these parental rights are inseparable from parental obligations. The will of God, when it commits to parents the trust of a child, gives also all needful power to enable them to execute that trust; endows them with a title to that respect and obedience, on which they must rely, in fulfilling their set task of training their child to usefulness and virtue.

You see, then, my young friends, that in refusing to honor your father and mother, you would act contrary to the will of that God, who has placed you under their care, to be furnished by them with whatever you need, and to be prepared by them for present and eternal happiness. He has commanded them to treat you with all that kind attention, which you remember at every period to have experienced; but in order that this may prove to be of real advantage, he has required you, on your part, to be under their guidance. He has directed them to provide for your support; but this you may put out of their power, if you dishonor them so far as to fall into habits of negligence and extravagance. He has charged them to form your characters; but how shall they do this, if you are deaf to their instructions, and heedless of their example? He is not unjust; and he would not have appointed to them such a duty as he has appointed, without conferring on them complete authority for its fulfilment. In requiring of them religiously to educate, and properly to maintain and establish you, he has virtually required you so to honor them, that their endeavors may not be used for these purposes in vain.

II. And, lest this indication of his will should be insufficient, he has given, secondly, very express notice of it in scripture.

The sense, which God entertains of filial piety, is set forth in scripture in peculiarly plain and striking terms. I had occasion, this morning, to remark on the conspicuous place,

which the commandment, requiring it, occupies in the decalogue, making, as it were, the link between the laws of the first and second tables, as the most elementary deduction from the first, and lying at the foundation of the latter. In other parts of the Old Testament, it is placed in immediate connexion with purely religious duties. 'Ye shall fear,' in the same sentence it is said, 'every man his mother and his father, and keep my sabbaths; I am the Lord your God;' and of those awful imprecations, commanded to be pronounced on the day of the passage over Jordan, the first was directed against idolatry, the second against him who should 'set light by his father or his mother.' The punishments denounced against filial impiety were as terrible, as any known to the Jewish law. Not only was it declared, 'he that smiteth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death;' but the sentence was extended to him who should wish them evil, or address them in profane and injurious language. 'Every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him.' A like penalty was prescribed for neglect of parental warnings, as we read in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. I need scarcely remind you, (so well must it be remembered by every one,) how often the wise author of the Proverbs brings this topic into view, and with what earnestness and force he urges it. 'A wise son,' he says, 'heareth his father's instruction; but a scorner heareth not rebuke.' 'A fool despiseth his father's instructions; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.' The power of children over their parents' peace and credit is enlarged on by the same high authority. 'Whoso loveth wisdom, rejoiceth his father.' 'Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son; but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.' 'A foolish son is grief to his father, and bitterness to her that

bare him.' And the heinousness and ill-desert of the crime of undutiful children is strongly set forth. 'Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.' 'Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith it is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer.' 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.' Nor does the New Testament bear a feebler testimony to the obligation of the duty in question, than the Old. Our Saviour addresses language of the most animated rebuke to those Pharisees, who withheld what they might have applied to the relief of their aged parents, under pretence of having consecrated it as an offering to God. The apostle Paul, in two different instances, names filial disobedience among crimes of the most serious character. In describing that prevailing depravity, which the gospel he preached was to root out from the world, he says that men were 'haters of God, despiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, — disobedient to parents;' and, in predicting a general apostacy, he describes it as a time when men shall be 'lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, — disobedient to parents, — unthankful, unholy.' Engaged as he is in his apostolic cares for the extensive concerns of that kingdom of righteousness, which he was erecting on the ruins of irreligion and vice, he is not unmindful of the basis, on which piety in every heart may best be built, nor negligent of enforcing their filial duties upon children. 'Let them learn first,' he says, 'to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.' 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.' 'Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.'

III. I trust, my young friends, that you are not so thoughtless, so indifferent to being well pleasing in the sight of God, but that you will be usefully impressed, by seeing how much this duty, of honoring your parents, is insisted on in his word. I trust it will give you satisfaction, in reflecting on every past instance of dutiful conduct, to think that at every such time you have been acting according to his will, often declared in the Bible, and that his all attentive eye has then viewed you with complacency; and I will not doubt, that when, at any time hereafter, you are tempted to pursue a different course, you will call to mind how often and how loudly he has declared himself against it, and how rash you are in exposing yourselves to his heavy displeasure. I am sure every heart among you will answer the appeal which is made, when I call on you, in the third place, to honor your father and mother, in return for their kindness to you.

Have you always borne in mind, how much you owe your parents, what multiplied and strong proofs of their affection you have had, the trouble they have undertaken, the anxieties they have undergone, the sacrifices they have made for your sakes? Have you always reflected, how fully they have shown you that your gratification was dearer to them than their own, and that there is nothing they were not willing to do and to bear, so that you might but be respected and happy? If you had always borne these facts in mind, would it have been possible that a look or word of discontent could ever have escaped you, even when they called on you for some duty, to which you were the most averse? Could you have the heart to grieve, for a moment, the bosom, which never knew for you any other feeling, than that of most disinterested love? There is much said of the unkindness of the world; and, as you advance in years, you will perhaps be tempted to think it is truly said. But of this you may be

certain, (and the thought, if you realize it, will be more and more full of comfort to you, the longer you live,) that there is one place where unmerited harshness is never to be found, and that is the bosom of a parent.

Can you fail to see the truth and fervor of your parents' affection for you? Consider what they are doing for you, day by day. While others at your age, with no father and mother to provide for them, and too young to provide for themselves, are suffering the hardships of want and neglect, or only rescued from them by the cold, however kind and ready hand of public charity, you are fed at the table of indulgent friends; you are clothed by their care, you are warmed at their fireside, and at night their blessing dismisses you to quiet sleep beneath their thoughtful protection. Are you sick? They administer to you. Are you unhappy? They soothe you. Are you perplexed? They counsel you. Are you running into danger? They check you. Are you obedient and industrious? They praise and reward you. What a sympathy do they show in all your disappointments! How happy are they made by all your little successes! You are required to make no provision for yourselves. All is done for you; and nothing else is expected on your part, but diligence to improve the opportunities which are afforded you. And, all this time, they, whom perhaps you are sometimes so thoughtless, as to disobey and pain, (thoughtless I say, for you could not do it, if you reflected,) are laboring and planning, perhaps struggling with an adverse fortune, to furnish you the means of comfort, of improvement, and a competent establishment in the world. When you go to your diversions or to your tasks, they go to the cares of the day, and spare no toil, and shrink not, whenever their condition requires it, from any deprivation, so you may enjoy the present, and come forward into life under promising auspices. It is recreation enough to them, if they can but

see you happy and improving. There was an earlier time, of which you have perhaps a partial recollection, when you were yet more a care than now; when almost every step of yours needed to be watched, and you had not yet learned to spare trouble, to the degree you now have. Yet, even then, when were parental care, and parental patience wanting? And there was a time yet earlier, of which you have no memory, when you were merely an incumbrance; when you were wholly unconscious of the affection, which never was thoughtless of you; when you could not utter a wish, nor move a step to supply one; when you were absolutely helpless and dependent. Yet who then so well attended as you? Eyes full of tenderness bent over your rest, wept for your sickness, and kindled at your smiles. Many a month, before you could lisp the names of your protectors, you were cherished with a kindness, which a nation's treasury could not purchase for its orphan king. When they watched by you, the night did not seem weary, wholly useless as you were; and tried as their hearts might be by the hardships of life, there was one feeling there sacred to happiness, in the hopes that you inspired. And still it will be so, through all the changes of the world. However sternly the world may frown, still to the last, there will be those, who will have smiles to meet you with. Still there will be eyes, that, till death quenches them, will always turn on you with fondness; with affectionate and proud congratulation when you are just to yourself, and when you fail to be so, scarcely with anything more unkind than sadness. A parent's attachment is not capricious, like that of many other friends. It is not superficial, like that of still more. His heart feels deeply, and cleaves long. Perhaps it is incapable of being entirely weaned. It will bleed at your misfortunes. It will break at your shame. But perhaps the dreadful experiment has never once succeeded, to estrange it completely even

from a guilty and dishonored child. The mourning of the great king of Israel, is a portrait the most true to nature. Misled by evil counsellors and a wild ambition, his unhappy child had conspired against, and all but compassed the destruction of his authority and life. Yet when he had fallen in rebellious battle, and by his death his father's throne was established, and his grey hairs spared from going down to the grave in blood, what is the language of the outraged monarch, the abused benefactor, the greatly injured parent? Is it the language of triumph? Is it the language of reproach? Is it the language even of just self-vindication? No; it is uttered in a solitary chamber, in an agony of weeping; and its words are, 'would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!'

And shall it ever be told of any one of you, my young friends, — I do not say, that he has rewarded the goodness of his parents with ingratitude and disobedience, for this I will not suppose, — but that he has been insensible to, or forgetful of their goodness? Shall it not be your fixed purpose and hearty endeavor, to consult their wishes, fulfil their expectations, and make them happy? How much more have they done for you, than you can ever hope to repay. And will you not think it the least you can do for them, to be dutiful, attentive, affectionate, and good; to spare them, among all their pains for you, the worst pain of all, that of seeing you intractable, headstrong, and vicious; to give them, when you have nothing else of value to give, the happiness of seeing you all they can approve, — all they could wish? Have they not done enough, to prove to you that they have your well-being at heart; and will you ever think of complaining of what they do, or objecting to what they command, as if they were oppressive or unkind?

IV. I might dwell, in the fourth place, my young friends, on the beauty of that virtue, which I am recommending;

and urge you to honor your father and mother, because filial piety is the loveliest attribute of the loveliest age, and one which compels men, of the most experience in life, to esteem, — I will say, to reverence, — the youngest child in whom it is found. But this is a consideration scarcely admitting of being pressed in any other way, than by calling your attention to such examples, as exhibit the power to attract and endear, which this quality possesses.

Is there any character then, let me ask, which, in your reflecting moments, you more respect and applaud, than that of the child who honors and loves his parents more than any other human being; who is uniformly respectful and affectionate in his deportment to them, and considerate of their wishes in whatever he does; who is always ready to trust and acquiesce in their judgment; who has a grateful sense of their attachment to him, and is continually seeking opportunities to show his love for them? So far from regarding such a child as deficient in spirit, do you not find, that you unconsciously attribute to him all the elevation and energy of character that can belong to his age? Do you not find yourselves prompt to expect, that, whatever may happen, he will be above everything mean, and equal to everything honest; that to do wrong, is the only thing in which he will be found backward; that in whatever is innocent, he will show himself the most light-hearted and happy of you all, because he does not take burdens upon his conscience; and that, where he sees his duty lie, he will venture to risk more, and bear more, and do more, than any number of others less conscientious and dutiful than he? Is there any person that strikes you as more praiseworthy and amiable, any that touches your feelings nearer, any that you more desire to make your friend, and would more thoroughly trust as such? Whether in childhood, or in mature life, is there any quality which more engages you

than this? Among all the attractive examples which scripture presents, is there any to which you find yourselves more attracted, than those which display the beauty of filial affection? Is there any part of the Old Testament, which interests you more than the history of Joseph; and, if you were to select the incidents, which seem to you most touching in that exquisitely simple and affecting narrative, would you not name the moment, when that glorious man, who had been an Egyptian menial and prisoner, and was the highest Egyptian prince, dismissed his attendants, when his full heart must be unburdened or burst, and, weeping aloud, could but ask, 'doth my father yet live?' And, next to this, do you not admire him, when you see him sending his aged parent succor in the famine of Canaan, and the message, 'come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and all that thou hast; and there will I nourish thee, lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty?' Does it not appear to you less honorable to Judah, that in him was the royal line of his family, than that, offering himself to slavery to save his father from grief, he said, 'it shall come to pass when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die, and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant our father, with sorrow to the grave; — now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord?' In all the history of the greatest king of Israel, does there seem to you a moment of truer glory, than when, seeing his mother approach him, as he sat surrounded by all the magnificence of an Asiatic court, he 'rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand, — and the king said unto her, "Ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay?"' And,

as if nothing were to be wanting to impress on your minds the sacredness of this duty, do you find anything in what you read of the suffering Saviour of men, which touches a deeper chord in your hearts, which speaks to you with a more subduing pathos, than that place which records, that when hanging on the cross, — earth and heaven bearing testimony to his finished work, — neither the agonies of a violent death, nor the triumphant contemplations on a world redeemed, sin and death vanquished, and the glories of the highest heaven at hand, could drive the feelings of natural affection from his filial heart? The tears of Mary fell not unregarded by her dying but conquering son, and his last earthly care was to bequeath his mother to the love of the disciple whom he loved.

If it were not, my young friends, that the importance of this duty is too great, to allow of its being exhibited in every point of view in many discourses, if it were not that you are urged to honor your father and mother by too many considerations, to admit even of touching upon them all, I would yet ask you to continue your attention to a subject so truly and richly profitable to you. In particular, I would remind you, how happy the course I have been recommending, will make these your youthful years; how much you will find yourselves respected and beloved on account of it by all, and how tenderly you will endear yourselves to those, by whom it most concerns you to be beloved. I would assure you, that to have honored your father and mother, will give you an advantage in your introduction into life, of which you will then first know how to estimate the worth. He who carries with him the character of a good son, will find everywhere a prepossession in his favor. It will be better to him than wealth, accomplishments, dexterity or address. I would urge on you, that filial piety will protect

you from the snares which may be laid for your youth, and be an anchor of safety in the worst storms that threaten you in the world; that it is the original bond of domestic society, the one root of all those feelings of kindred, which, next to the religious, we own for the most amiable, and find to be most nearly interesting to us, of all. I would urge, that it is intimately connected with other excellent dispositions; and that, in causing the character, while yet pliable, to be effectually profited by the discipline it receives, it lays a foundation for a virtuous life, and a happy immortality. But, though the field is too extensive to be further ventured on, you will not expect me to conclude, without just alluding to the promise of the Jewish law, referred to in the text. I would gladly, my young friends, assure you of every blessing, as the reward of the course I have recommended. It would rejoice me, to hold out to you the promise of living to mature, through many happy years, the virtues you had formed in childhood, and of descending in peace and honor to your grave in a good old age. But in length of days is not the encouragement, by which christianity, providing its sanctions in the condition of another life, excites you to your duty. The grave respects not the meek head of youthful piety, any more than that which fourscore years have silvered. Excellent dispositions, and fair prospects give 'no discharge' nor respite 'in that war;' else many hearts, that now bleed in silent resignation, would have been spared the piercing wound. But that which was distinguished from the rest, by being the first commandment with promise, is yet rich in promise to you: in promise of far greater encouragement and worth, than would be that of happiness through the longest life. It points, for its recompense, to happiness through an endless eternity. 'Let children learn,' is one of its recorded forms, 'to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for this is good and acceptable

before God.' To be acceptable before God, my young friends, is the highest distinction to which you, or any living being, can aspire. It includes peace in life; comfort in death; bliss and glory through eternity. What then, though I may not promise you length of days, — what though the eyes that now dwell on you so fondly, may soon be swimming in sorrow, and the arms that enfold you so closely, may lay you down in a damp, cold, narrow bed? — this, however, I may venture to assure you of; that, if you honor your parents by a dutiful and religious conduct, your days, few or many, will be honorable and happy; that the more they are, the more your virtues will expand and be matured in human view, and the fewer they are, the sooner you will be in heaven; that while you live, the eye that sees you will bless you, and the ear, that hears you, bear approving witness to you; and that when you die, though your bodies will dissolve beneath the green turf, which many parental 'thoughts that lie too deep for tears' will day by day revisit, your spirits will be at rest in the arms of a better parent than here you have known, — in the arms of your Father in Heaven.

SERMON XXII.

DUTIES OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

GENESIS XLIII. 29, 30.

AND HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES, AND SAW HIS BROTHER BENJAMIN, HIS MOTHER'S SON,—AND HE SAID, GOD BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE, MY SON; AND JOSEPH MADE HASTE,—AND HE SOUGHT WHERE TO WEEP, AND HE ENTERED INTO HIS CHAMBER, AND WEPT THERE.

The history of Joseph presents a beautiful exhibition of the fraternal, as well as of the filial character. Sold in his youth into foreign bondage by the vindictive jealousy of his elder brethren, they next met, — he, as the actual sovereign of the country where he had been enslaved, — they, as suppliants to him for a supply of food. Without recognition on their part, he dismissed them amply and gratuitously provided, taking measures only to secure that they should return, and that then their number should be full. When the event, for which he had arranged, came to pass, and he had first inquired and been satisfied respecting his father's welfare, and then had learned that their new companion was their younger brother, his own mother's son, his childhood's playmate in their distant Syrian home, the sharer of

his light joys and short lived sorrows before greatness had made him know anything of its littleness and pains, there came a throng of thoughts too mighty for the self-command of the firm and practised ruler of Egypt, and, (as we are told in the text,) before he could do more than utter a single exclamation of devout blessing, he was fain to seek, in his chamber, where he should relieve his over-full heart, by tears. — The sequel, as well as what I have repeated, is familiar; for the history of Joseph is a composition, to the taste of all times, all countries, all readers. In the moment of tumultuous feeling, when, excited apparently by the dutiful proposal of Judah, he abruptly makes himself known, his first care is to assure himself, past any danger of mistake, of his father's welfare; 'I am Joseph, doth my father yet live?' — his second, to reconcile his trembling brothers to themselves, urging that it was God's providence, rather than their malice, which had brought him where he was, and that it had done so, to the end of giving him more power to prove himself friendly to them. 'Come near to me, I pray you; — I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. — Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. For God did send me before you to preserve life. — God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.' The purpose, thus announced, he proceeds with a princely munificence to execute. He detains them no longer than to kiss them all, and weep upon them, from going to gladden the heart of their long disconsolate parent with the unlooked for tidings, and tell him that an Egyptian province awaited his occupation and that of his house. 'Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and

thy children, and thy children's children, — and there I will nourish thee, — lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.' He puts off his greatness before them, to join them in establishing their parent in his new home; to stand among them as an equal, by Jacob's death-bed; and to journey with them to lay his bones in the field of Macpelah, by the side of those of Abraham, Isaac, and Leah. When, (fearful that his displeasure would return, now that the parent, whose presence might inspire relenting thoughts, was no more,) they send humbly and penitently to bespeak again his forgiveness, for their father's sake, and that of their father's God, he comforts them, and speaks kindly to them, — speaks 'to their heart,' as the expressive simplicity of the original conveys the fact, — and says, 'Now, therefore, fear ye not, I will nourish you, and your little ones.' And, dying himself, he gives them the last mark of confidence, by bequeathing to them his body, to be laid by their posterity in the holy soil of the promised land.

Every one sees the nobleness and attractiveness of this conduct. I have brought it before your notice, with a view to lead your thoughts to the nature of the fraternal relation, and of the mutual service, for which it should be understood to call. And I would seriously ask, my hearers, whether commonly we make nearly enough of it; whether we give sufficient heed to its obligations; whether, both by young and old, it might not be turned to much more account, for the best uses, than is often done.

I. Let us endeavor to find, in the first place, the basis of the obligation which belongs to that bond. For it is not expressly assumed responsibility, like that of the conjugal or parental relation; nor, like that of the filial, is it such as is incident to a condition of inferiority, dependence, and, if I may so say, ownership. Nor would I venture to rest it on

the ground of a supposed natural affection, of which, as an independent property of the human soul, much has been written, but for the most part, very obscurely and unsatisfactorily, except as far as the name stands for the parental instinct.

1. I find a solid basis for the obligation of fraternal love, in that great precept and principle of our religion, that we are to 'do good unto all, as we have opportunity:'—of course, then, in proportion as we have opportunity. Now to how many, of all the world, have we more frequent and more ample opportunity to do good, than to brothers and sisters, especially through the early years of life?

God means us all for benefactors, my hearers. That we well understand, or ought to understand. He has given us capacities fitting us, and impulses disposing us, to that office. But we are to execute it, each in his own place and manner; and accordingly, what his will is, respecting our individual agency of usefulness, we are to learn from indications of his providence, as well as from directions of his word. Wherever he has given us a peculiarly large endowment of beneficent power, there we are to own a peculiarly urgent summons, on his part, to beneficent endeavor. If this be not doubted, as I do not apprehend it will be, then I have only further to ask, whether, for a long time at least, we are not more with brothers and sisters, than with any other companions; whether, accordingly, as far as through rivalships, disputes, and interferences, we may occasion disturbance in any quarter, or, on the other hand, may impart pleasure by our gentleness and generosity, it will not be the comfort and enjoyment of brothers and sisters, especially, that we shall thus promote or abridge; and whether their characters, through the forming period of life, and so their happiness through life and beyond it, are not subject, in a peculiar degree, to beneficial or mischievous influences pro-

ceeding from our sentiments and example? If we have ascertained this, we have established thus far our responsibility in the case. And a like responsibility will appear to us to extend beyond the period of constant domestic intercourse in youth, if we perceive further that, beyond that period, brothers and sisters retain ties, recollections, and habits, and are likely to retain sentiments and interests, in common, which give them important facilities for access to each other's minds, and control over each other's fortunes and feelings.

2. There is a very moving appeal, prompting to the sentiment of fraternal love, involved in that of filial duty; so beautifully are our best sources of improvement and happiness made, by a gracious providence, to blend, and thus strengthen, the influences going forth from them respectively.

You profess to love the authors of your being. You declare yourself not insensible to the disinterestedness, shown in all their efforts and sacrifices for your good. If they still live, you own yourself bound to do all in your power to increase their happiness. You see yourself deeply culpable, if you should knowingly cost them a needless pang. If they are no more here for you to bless, you say that you take delight in doing what they would have desired to see you do. You think lightly of no expressed or presumed wish of theirs, now that they may no longer utter it. On the contrary, you find a precious satisfaction in calling up their revered idea; imagining what, were they present, would afford them pleasure, and making it a rule for your own conduct. If you are sincere in using this language, (and it is no more than the natural, just, in no degree exaggerated language of filial gratitude,) then it is impossible that you should not find yourself under one of the strongest motives to concern yourself for the good of those, who are or were

objects with you of that same parental affection, of which, extended to yourself, you profess to think with so much sensibility. If they are with you, you see, — if not with you, still you know, — that nothing earthly is, or was, nearer to their hearts, than the welfare of their children. Study assiduously to promote that welfare, then; or give up your pretence of caring for their wishes. He is not only an unkind brother, — he is equally an unnatural son, — who will banish from his heart that to which his parent's heart yearns and clings. And, on the other hand, what more acceptable or effectual aid can a parent have in his tasks, than in the mutual services of those, for whom his cares are alike expended; and what happier earthly ground of confidence can he have for them, when his tasks are done, than in the knowledge, that, as far as they have power, they will fill his place to one another? Yes, my hearers; if you love your parents, you will not be thoughtless of fulfilling their first wishes. You will endeavor to benefit their children.

3. So much is one of the simplest argumentative deductions, determining a form of duty. There is more of the same nature, which I merely touch upon, for it may be thought to belong rather to the sphere of sentiment than of reason; though, if a man is not moved by it, he would seem of a material too coarse, to be made to present, under any excitements, a very finished or winning form of goodness.

We look, my hearers, in a brother's countenance, and what a volume of touching recollections do we read. The first scene, distinct in the memory of either, is that of the nursery which we shared. Our infancy was hushed on the same loving bosom. Our peevish childhood was soothed by the same gentle voice. Our earliest prayers were lisped by the same knee. If we have advanced further, every thought of the sports and tasks, the schemes, the meditations and adventures of youth, places us again by each

other's side. Our paths, however different since, were once merely the same. Our enjoyments and vexations had the same sources; our hopes and fears the same objects; our industry, such as it was, the same place and the same discipline. Each can witness to what each learned from a father's anxious counsels, or owed to his ready bounty. Each can respond to the other's memory of the ever varying, never ceasing expressions of maternal fondness. Each can speak of early associates of both, in a manner which is reflected by the other's consciousness, 'as face answereth to face.' We call up together the shades of all in by-gone time that interested, all that gladdened or distressed, the parental home; the farewell, and the return; the plans for the departing, and the intelligence from the distant; the encouragement and congratulation, the disappointment and sympathy; the honored guest, and the wonted inmate; the health and the sickness; the bereavement and the blessing; the festive hospitality, the funereal gloom. If that parental home yet may welcome, when it has dismissed us, can we ever pass its threshold, without hearing ourselves addressed as Joseph charged his brethren, 'see that ye fall not out by the way?' Can we breathe its atmosphere, without feeling our hearts filled anew, (if unhappily anything be needed to recall them,) with the spirit of our earliest friendships? Can we lie down again, from our journeyings to and fro in the earth, to its welcome repose, and not be sure, before we close our eyes, that the household guardian angels of our childhood have already exorcised every ungentle feeling, we may have harbored against any who once shared with us their care? Or, if the flame of the familiar hearth be quenched, or strangers now sit round it, — if no more, save in the narrow house 'appointed for all the living,' we may seek together those who, living, cared for us alike, — is not then the feeling, that, as we belonged alike to them, so we

belong to one another, made, if possible, more intense and sacred? At a parent's grave, can there be anything but love in brothers' hearts? Is there such a meaning word as sympathy, and has not sympathy in such tender thoughts, as the blended experience of early life and of parental care inspires, a softening and attaching power over the fraternal minds which it possesses?

II. Our remarks on the basis of obligations belonging to the fraternal bond, have all along implied, that they were, in general, obligations to the exercise of a friendly spirit. But how, in the second place, is this spirit to be manifested, in the particular relation in question? No more convenient way occurs to me of taking a survey of this ground, than by observing what kind of conduct is due to the claims of the relation, at successive periods of life.

1. If you, my young friends, who are sustaining it in the years of childhood, desire to show yourselves good brothers and sisters, you may, and you need, do much to that end, day by day.

There are continually occurring, in your intercourse together, what are capable of being made occasions of strife. But, if you allow them to be so to you, rely upon it, that, — apart from the wickedness of so doing, which will bring upon you the disapprobation of your friends and others, and the displeasure of Almighty God, — apart, I say, from this, you are giving yourself immediate pain, as well as doing yourself lasting injury, by the allowance of your angry feeling, whereas a willing relinquishment of the gratification you desired, will afford you more pleasure, in the approbation of your own mind, and the very indulgence of generous emotion, than you could possibly have experienced in having your own way. I need not urge this on any of you, who have been accustomed to try the experiment; for you well know, that, the oftener you have

repeated it, the happier you have been. And I will add, (though I would be cautious in presenting so inferior a consideration, for a motive,) that you must have been singularly unfortunate, if you have even found yourselves losers, in the only way that it might be thought possible you should. On the contrary, unless those were very rugged natures, with which you have had to deal, you must have seen that the disinterestedness, which you have practised, you have meanwhile taught to them, making your habitual intercourse with them an intercourse of peace and generosity, and giving you, in your turn, the benefit of sacrifices on their part, like what you have shown yourselves willing to make. Let me urge upon all of you, my young friends, to find your happiness now together in this course, as well as to habituate and prepare yourselves for like worthy and happy conduct on a larger scale hereafter. Be assured that nothing, worth having, is to be gained by you from one another by strife, and that everything is to be gained by gentleness and reciprocal self-denials. Do not answer an unkind word, except by kindness. Do not let it be seen that you notice a disobliging action, except by taking the greater pains to show, in your own conduct, how much more becoming and graceful an act of different character would have been. Never allow a feeling of jealousy of a brother's or sister's pretensions, or envy of their superiority in beauty, knowledge, or anything else, to gain a footing within you. It would be a sad guest for a young heart to entertain. And if you suspect that anything, intended for the more rapid improvement of your mind, is leading to this, resist it, or have done with it. It is much better that you should be far less knowing, than that you should love a brother or sister a particle the less. Never entertain the idea, that they are the objects of your parents' preference; nor permit yourself to wish them, in any particular, anything short of the best good which can

befall them. And, of course, you are by no means to limit yourselves to avoiding occasions of unfriendly feeling, though this is to be scrupulously done. It will be more for your own good, than you can now possibly be made to understand, if you apply yourselves cordially to contrive and do all sorts of good to them; if you join them in their amusements, though it should call you to break off from your own; if you encourage and help them in their studies; if you befriend them among their associates; if you share with them what you have to share; if you interest yourselves with others, to procure for them the little indulgencies they desire. Above all, you will illustriously dignify your age, when you lead them by your counsel, encouragement, and example, to find their share of the enjoyments, which are only to be found in goodness. No one can now convey to you an idea of the happiness, which you will then be storing up for yourselves, in the gratitude which, from their early days to their latest, those whom you have so served and blessed will cherish towards you; the love you will have won from the guardians of you both; the esteem and confidence your course will have secured, on the part of all, by whom it has been witnessed; and your own joyful memory, that even your gay childhood had been spent in doing the work the most acceptable to God, for the benefit of those whom best God bade you love.

2. If that other class of you, my friends, who, having arrived at the more advanced stage of youth, still remain inmates of the parental dwelling, have pursued in childhood the course which I have been describing, you will be in little danger of abandoning it, now that you are putting away other 'childish things.' On the contrary, you will be taught the more scrupulous caution, by observing how much more disturbance in your parents' home your dissensions might create, now that you have acquired a degree of inde-

pendence of their control, and your passions have grown stronger; and you will have become so used to regarding brothers and sisters as your charge, and you will perceive so many plans of kindness, which hitherto have been renewed, and have succeeded each other, hour by hour, to be still unfinished on your hands, and will be conscious of having, all along, enjoyed so much in prosecuting them, that you will find yourselves under all excitements to abound in the same work, more and more.

Well may you be encouraged to do so. — Brothers and sisters have become capable, at your age, of being, on all accounts, most important friends to one another. A brother has then large resources in a brother's attachment; a sister in a sister's. Both have now had some experience of life, and ought to have something of that wisdom, which it belongs to the discipline of experience to teach. They have acquired knowledge, to be communicated for each other's improvement and guidance, and made friends, who may be engaged in endeavors for each other's benefit. Their mutual regard and confidence is, or ought to have been, established, by long practice of mutual reliance and good offices. Each knows the other's character and history; and accordingly, (in some greater or less degree,) his or her strong and weak points, his advantages and encouragements, deficiencies and dangers. Each knows the other's associates; and, accordingly, where to look for any influence, which himself may not possess, or may desire to overthrow. The mutual relation they bear, and the fact, that, (the prosperity of the household being a common cause,) the honor or shame, the success or loss of any member of it concerns the rest, authorize each to interest himself with the other by advice and remonstrance, or for him by interference with yet other persons. Evidently, for the great object of affecting character, the opportunities enjoyed by

them, in the way of insinuating their own sentiments, enforcing their principles, and recommending their example, are peculiarly favorable, or can at least be watched and improved till they are made so; and each of them involves a corresponding duty. And the same may be said of opportunity afforded, in this relation, for all other offices of friendship. Though partly dependent on the will and past habit of the parties, (who may be inclined to repose more or less confidence,) that opportunity can hardly fail to be great; and when it is most ample, it is happiest for all, for domestic society, excluding, by its nature, some causes of collision, and, when regulated in its proper spirit, hindering, from the first, the operation of others, is the fittest of all soils for friendship to flourish in. A brother can enter fully into a brother's feelings, — a sister into a sister's; and thus their mutual kindness may be commonly better directed, better timed, and, in various ways, more acceptable, and their sympathy, advice, or aid more profitable, than that of other friends. And, in particular, the relation of brother and sister to one another, is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful which providence has instituted; forbidding, from the different pursuits of the two sexes, anything of that rivalry and interference, which is so often the bane of friendship among other equals, and, (without the possibility of the sentiment being tainted with any alloy of passion,) finding scope for that peculiar tenderness, strength, trustingness of attachment, which belong to the relation of delicacy, dependence, and retirement on the one part, to energy, self-reliance, and enterprise on the other. Is anything more delightful, than to witness this relation sustained, as God, when he arranged it, designed that it should be? a mutual confidence, and esteem, and sense of privilege in each other's regard, evinced and renewed in every daily communication; the sister watching the brother's growing

virtues and consequence with a modest pride, while she checks his adventurousness with her well-timed scruples, and finds for him a way to look more cheerfully on his defeats, — the brother, looking on the sister's graces with a fondness that would be like a parent's, only that it is gayer, more confident, and more given to expression, and studying, with ambitious assiduity, to requite the gentle guidance, to which his impetuous spirit delights to yield itself; the one, zealous and constant in all acceptable kindnesses, in her secluded sphere, which God has given her an intuitive sagacity to invent, the other delighting to communicate all means of improvement, which his different opportunities of education have prepared him to offer; the one, gratefully conscious of a protection as watchful as it will be prompt and firm, the other of an interested love, which, whether in silence or in words, can speak his praises, the most movingly, where he may most desire to have them spoken. Is anything in the relations appointed by him, who, for wise and kind ends, 'hath set the solitary in families,' more delightful to witness, than such a brotherly and sisterly devotion? If there be, it is what remains to be added to the picture. It is seen, when they who are thus united, make the younger members of their band a common care, and turn back to offer the gentle and encouraging hand of a love more discreet than that of mere equals, and more familiar than the parental, to lead their childish unpractised steps along that path of filial piety, of fraternal union, and religious wisdom, which themselves, walking together in it, have found, throughout, a way of such pleasantness and peace. Yes; earth has no fairer sight, than a company, so marshalled, of young travellers to heaven.

3. There is little further room for exhortation, my friends. When our childhood and youth have, in the fraternal circle, been thus passed, what is to come after may almost be

relied on to take care of itself. We shall not then be of those, who think that the home of our birth is a place, where lasting friendships may or may not have their origin, according as accident may dictate. We shall not think of going, each his own separate, unregarding, and unregarded way, when we take our departure from our father's door.

If we are the younger members of such a band, it will be much more than a habit, which will bid us still cherish an enduring gratitude to those, who were among the earliest to make us acquainted with the satisfactions of that sentiment. If we are the elder, they who were long such endeared objects to us of protecting care, will not cease to be objects of an affectionately vigilant concern. And from those, towards whom our friendship has stood more on a footing of equality, it will be no common chance that will have power to divide us. Absence will not vacate a place in our hearts, which, made vacant, can be filled again with no other like tenant; and, to the end that it may not, all accessible and suitable methods of keeping the mutual interest alive, by such communications as absence admits, will have more than punctilious, they will have emulous attention. It will be a bitter grief, but it will not move our anger, if a brother should prove unworthy. Others may have cause to renounce him; but, before he can be renounced by us, there must be stronger reasons than what are adequate to justify them. Who is to be looked to, to sustain and reclaim an offending brother, if, as soon as he has offended, a brother's love is to fail him? No hazard of division will ever be intentionally taken by offence offered on our own part; and no offence offered on the other will be suffered to create it, if there be generosity enough left, for any meekness, forbearance, and long-suffering of ours to heal the wound. We shall rejoice, if so it may be, in using the advantages of our earlier prosperity, for those who are

to follow us, in bringing them forward favorably into life; and shall feel, while we are doing this, that we could scarcely have had a richer reward for our exertions, or obtained a better sense of the worth of our success. We shall adopt any new connexions, which they make, to our own friendship, putting ourselves to special pains to deserve and attract a good-will like the fraternal, from such as may become intimately allied to them; that so not only all diversities of interest, and all influences adverse to our perfect sympathy, may to the utmost be avoided, but that new and grateful resources for contributing to their chief happiness may be secured and used. These are methods, by which fraternal confidence is kept alive in more than even its early strength, when the ardor of youth is over, and the extended relations of manhood have made other claims upon the heart; — claims, which, if they be nearer, still aim at no exclusion, and create no interference, if a wise justice but continue to be done to those of earlier date. As we go down the vale of years together, we shall be attentive to secure for ourselves, and offer to them, (as far as is consistent with other duties,) the satisfactions of that society, which will not fail to be a valued resource to both; and, according as their circumstances and ours call for and permit the service, we shall find a grateful satisfaction in ministering to the comfort of their age. And as we have loved them, because they were as dear as ourselves to our own best earthly friends, we shall transfer, again, a portion of our regard, to the children on whom their affections and hopes are set. While they live, we shall find pleasure in taking all suitable and needed means to let them see, — and if it will do anything to assuage the solicitudes of their departure, we shall take care to have them then understand, — that what has been nearest to their hearts will never be without a place in ours. If we wish to do our measure of

good in the world, my hearers, do we not often think, that our power is peculiarly great, and our obligation strong, to exert ourselves in this way for those, whose feelings will be peculiarly gratified by our kindness, and be painfully wounded by a sense of our neglect; for whom the mere loss of interchange of thought and memory with us, if there were nothing else in question, would cut off a main source of enjoyment, such as, from the nature of the case, it is impossible they should any where else command? Does not this part of our nature, — the affections, — deserve our reverence, and shall we think of defrauding them, in respect to so just a claim? Do we ever present to ourselves the thought of meeting, in a better world, the authors of our being; and do we not fancy, that it will add a delight to the joys of our re-union, if they and we then know, that, since the parting, we have been diligently endeavoring to accomplish their first earthly, their parental wishes?

I have exceeded due limits, and yet I have left two points of interest, which I intended to urge in conclusion, not so much as touched. I will not, however, forbear to throw out a single hint upon them. Apart from the personal obligation of children of the same house, to cultivate a mutual good-will, I would present to parents the forming of this sentiment, as a distinct object to be contemplated in the work of education. You wish, my friends, to do your best, towards providing for your children's welfare, when you shall have them less under your direction, or shall be no longer here to care for them. You would desire to attach to them friends, who may aid your endeavors for their good, and who, in some degree, might supply to them your place. Provide for them such friends, in their brothers and sisters. Take pains to accustom them to feel and act as mutual well wishers, till they shall be incapable, as far as you can

make it so, of ever entertaining a thought of doing otherwise. That would be the nearest possible to an effectual provision, of the kind you covet. It is one which it belongs to you to make, and which, rightly endeavoring, you will scarcely fail to make; and it may well be an object of your daily care. When you witness little heart burnings and altercations now, consider, if you do not seasonably check and reconcile them, and purify their source, how probable it is, that the like will follow on a much more serious scale, when you may not be here, or being here, may no longer have the power of authoritative interference, to control their consequences. When you see them serving one another in little things, acknowledge a joyful omen, what useful benefactors they will, by and by, reciprocally be in greater, if you afford the proper encouragement and guidance; and ask yourselves, how, by providing for them means, and suggesting to them expedients, for this kind of conduct, you may give them increased practice in it, and relish for it. You remember the fable of the parent, who, dying, called his children round him, and offered to each a twig, which they easily broke; then, binding all together, called them to witness that the fagot could defy their utmost strength. It was a truly parental thought. Your children, united by a fellow-feeling of interest and character, will be each to other a trustworthy support. If you would build up your house, let it be your care to infuse into them this spirit. If your solicitude looks to the higher object of their best improvement, and attainment of life's great objects, the lesson is still the same.

Finally; a peculiar importance attaches to the early cultivation of the sentiment which I have been recommending, because, in the constitution of fraternal society, it would appear that providence has made its arrangement for the elementary discipline of the benevolent man. When we

serve our parents the most commendably, still it is as our superiors that we serve them; under a sense of positive duty; with a consciousness that they have a claim upon us of strict right. In intercourse with brothers and sisters, our earliest opportunity is provided, for acquiring and exercising the spirit, which is, all our lives long, to be manifested to equals, and to those a little below or above us. Here are our first lessons taken in those habits of making sacrifices, encountering inconveniences, stifling and conciliating discontents, and studying opportunities to be kind and useful, without the coercion of any claim upon us capable of being enforced, which, hereafter, we are constantly to be practising upon, if we ever come to act our part worthily, as members of the more extended family of man. But I cannot enlarge. Let us heartily bless God, my friends, that from the first to the last of our lives, his wise and gracious providence has made such dispositions to the end of the best discipline of our characters. And let it be our earnest purpose and endeavor, that neither for ourselves, nor for those whom he has committed to our guidance, any portion of the benefit, so designed, shall be lost.

SERMON XXIII.

DUTIES OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

COLOSSIANS III. 22 — IV. 1.

SERVANTS, OBEY IN ALL THINGS YOUR MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH; NOT WITH EYE SERVICE, AS MEN PLEASERS, BUT IN SINGLENESS OF HEART, FEARING GOD. AND WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT UNTO MEN; KNOWING THAT OF THE LORD YE SHALL RECEIVE THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE, FOR YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST. BUT HE THAT DOTH WRONG SHALL RECEIVE FOR THE WRONG WHICH HE HATH DONE.

AND THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS; MASTERS, GIVE UNTO YOUR SERVANTS THAT WHICH IS JUST AND EQUAL, KNOWING THAT YE ALSO HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN.

Though not, strictly speaking, a natural relation, that of master and servant may be considered a permanent and established relation of civil society. Putting out of view the case of involuntary servitude, (which, inasmuch as it is oppressive, deserves to be reckoned unnatural,) as soon as an unequal distribution of property takes place, there will be those, who, for the sake of devoting themselves the better to different labors, or else of avoiding labor in every shape, will be disposed to compensate others for doing many things for them, in preference to doing them for themselves; and,

on the other hand, there will be a class, who will find it for their interest to render such services, for the sake of such compensation. Again; when arts and trades come into use, it is manifestly for the advantage of those who practise, and those who would learn them, to make an exchange of service on the one part for instruction on the other. From these two occasions arises the relation of masters, to domestic servants, and to apprentices. The apostle, in the text, had reference to the condition of involuntary servitude, which, though christianity could not approve, it did not undertake at once to overthrow, but left to be supplanted in the gradual progress of its benevolent principles; steadily true, in this as in other things, to the rule of not rudely disturbing the political relations of society, but merely establishing principles, which, in the gradual course of time, would surely and safely reform them all. Even that condition was no disgrace to him whose lot was cast in it, however disgrace might attach to one, who had unrighteously reduced a fellow-man to that condition, or who unrighteously detained him there. Still less can any dishonor be supposed to attach to a place of service, in any form in which it exists among us. We are all servants, one to another. At least, we ought to be. Serving in no way, — it is equally true, in both senses of the phrase, that we have no business in the world. Children owe service to parents, professional men to the needy, friend to friend, the citizen to the state. The master of christians 'came to minister,' and taught his disciples that he that would be chief among them should be 'as he that doth serve.' There are differences of dignity, no doubt, in the different departments of service; but, as far as belongs to the mere relation of service, he who, by his own free contract, performs his part in another apartment of our dwellings, is as honorable as the revered man, whom we engage

to heal our distempers, or protect us in the administration of the law.

In the remarks, suggested by the text, which I am now to offer, I shall have regard to the relation of apprentices, as well as to that of domestic servants; since, though the duties and the privileges, belonging to these two spheres of service, are not the same, the nature of the relation is, and consequently the principles of moral obligation connected with both. Many of the remarks to be made, it will be seen, might even be extended, in their application, to other departments of trust and agency; such, especially, as imply, like these, an obligation to be controlled by an employer's will, as well as to attend to his interest.

I. The directions of the text to servants, respect the nature of the service to be rendered, and the spirit which is to actuate them in rendering it.

1. As to the first, its precept is, 'servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh;' in all things, that is, in which they are your masters; in all things to which their authority as masters rightfully extends.

Of course, this does not extend so far, as to render obligatory any unlawful command. It is too obvious a principle to need to be stated, that the divine precepts are not to be contravened through submission to any human will; though, in fact, the apostle has introduced this qualification in the context, where he declares that that obedience to which servants are bound, they ought to render in the fear of God. A domestic servant cannot plead his obligation to obey, in justification of any agency of his in the guilty pleasures of his master; nor can an apprentice excuse himself, on that ground, for adulterating commodities in which his master deals, or being concerned in any deception in a sale or purchase, or in executing any fraud upon the revenue. Again; where servitude is voluntary, the obedience, which is con-

tracted for, is all that is due; and this is either matter of express stipulation, or else is determined by the common practice of that particular place, which a person undertakes to fill. A servant does not hire himself, to be the subject of arbitrary and oppressive impositions; nor does compliance with these make any part of the obedience, to which he is in conscience bound. He has not engaged for, and therefore is not obliged to undertake, the offices of any other place than his own; though here, provided what is proposed to him do not amount to unnecessary or severe exaction, he will do well not to insist on his immunities too rigorously, but rather, as he hopes to be liberally treated himself, be disposed to make himself useful in extraordinary services, for which occasion may call. And the obedience, which is the duty of both, is to be manifested in an orderly compliance with the regulations, established for the government of the place, where service is rendered; in 'not answering again,' as the apostle calls it in another place, that is, in refraining from contradictions, provocations, and expressions of resentment; in docility, and a deportment in all respects attentive and respectful.

2. Servants are taught, again, the spirit, in which their obedience is to be rendered, in the injunctions to obey, 'not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God,' and to do all, whatsoever they do, 'heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men.'

They are to practise a religiously conscientious faithfulness to them, who, for the time being, are their 'masters according to the flesh;' which is, in fact, nothing more than faithfulness to their own engagements. They have stipulated to receive compensation from another, for attending in their respective departments of service to his interests; and that accordingly they are bound in justice carefully to do. They must be industrious in the use of that time, of which they

have contracted to give another the benefit. They must be studious to employ their best skill in his behalf. They must be punctual and precise in the services which are looked for at their hands, which it is often quite as important should be well timed, as in other respects well executed. They must regard themselves as confidential persons. Their situation is one of trust, which it is a great sin to betray. Whatever, not meant for the world, comes to their knowledge, in the freedom of domestic communion, or in the agencies in which they are employed, it is gross perfidy in them to reveal. Their master's property is in their hands, for their use and for their management. In the former case, they are to take care not to use it wastefully, which is a species of dishonesty, but with all reasonable frugality and care. In the latter, they are to transact business in relation to it with exactness and attention, and a solicitous endeavor to exert, in proper ways, their best skill, and promote, to the utmost, their master's interest. In both cases, I need not say that it is shameful dishonesty, aggravated by the wickedness of a breach of trust, to convert to their own advantage what has been committed to their care, either by that 'purloining,' which St. Paul specifies as a sin they must avoid, or in any way different from what was contemplated; and, in both, not only are they not to allow themselves to injure him whom they serve, by design, or inattention, or improvidence, but they may not connive at it in fellow-servants, nor knowingly permit any other persons to do it. Children are more or less subject to good or ill treatment from them; and to treat these unkindly, or do anything to corrupt their minds, is a most cruel treachery to the confidence reposed in them. In short, the obligations of this condition require nothing less, than that whatever duty, according to express or implied stipulation, belongs to it, be performed heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men; not with the hypocritical, syco-

phantic eye-service of men-pleasers, but with a conscientious and self-denying, an alert and cheerful and cordial diligence, — a diligence and attention as scrupulous in the master's absence, as beneath his eye. A servant's or an apprentice's time is his master's. So is the best use of his talents. They have been engaged, and they must be given. It is not a question to be raised, whether a master's interest is to suffer, or to fail to be promoted, by endeavors which, in his proper sphere, a servant is capable of making. The strictest obligations are upon him, not to suffer such an event to take place by his sloth, or negligence, or voluntary incapacity, or ill will. God holds him accountable for his fulfilment of this trust. The gospel has laid its solemn charge upon him, that, 'with good will,' he 'do service, and show all good fidelity,' adorning thus 'the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

II. The injunction upon masters to discharge their duty, is founded upon the general obligation of equity. 'Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.'

It is clearly just, to give them punctually and readily the wages of their labor; and to withhold these, by unreasonable delay, is one of the most inexcusable forms of oppression of the poor. We have no right to interpret their remaining with us, into acquiescence, on their part, in such delay. They may not be able to leave us at the time, without some inconvenience or disadvantage; or they may think, that, remaining with us, they have the best prospect of obtaining, by and by, what is their right.

We have no right to exact from them service of a different kind or degree, from that comprehended in the contract. They may submit to the demand, rather than incur dismission, or expose themselves to our displeasure; but this does not hinder it from being unjust on our part. We cannot righteously take such advantage of our superiority. The

most we are justified in doing, is to solicit extraordinary services as a favor, which we should then hold ourselves ready to acknowledge by some suitable return. Apprentices may not equitably be employed in menial or other offices, different from what it was understood that they should undertake, to the prejudice of the instruction, which they engaged with us to obtain. Their instruction is their wages; and to abate from this, for the sake of serving any advantage or convenience of our own, is to practise on them a double fraud, laying on them at the same time a more burdensome duty, and requiting it with a scantier compensation.

When either leave us, whether sooner than we will or not, they have a claim to the fullest and promptest testimony from us to all their good qualities. It is no more than common justice, to say of any man all the good we may, when and as occasion calls for it; and, in this case, it would be peculiarly ungenerous and unequitable to refuse such justice, because that testimony, which it is in our power alone to give, is precisely what will be everywhere demanded of the individual, to give him now his fair chance in the business by which he is to get a livelihood.

No advantage, which either may expect from our service, will justify us in incommoding them with needless hardships, fatigues, interruptions, or restraints. Not only are a proper maintenance, and suitable accommodations, as custom regulates such things, not only are these what we have virtually engaged, and they are authorized to look for. But further; as we would have them construe their obligations generously, so we should do ours. We should have a considerate and kind regard for their comfort and ease, and, in the arrangement of their services, endeavor to allow them such privileges as we may, (not inconsistent with the objects, for which we have engaged them,) of intermission

from their tasks; of sufficient opportunity for refreshment and rest; of the command, for their own purposes, of some time which they may appear disposed well to employ, whether for improvement, or, in due time and place, for harmless pleasure; and, in short, of manifold indulgencies and forbearances, which, without undertaking to supply their places for them, it is hourly in our power to practise, and by practising, to make their lives much happier.

We should have a considerate and kind regard for their feelings. They have not engaged themselves to be the subjects of our caprice, nor the objects of our ill-temper; and though they may have motives of their own for still consenting to this sacrifice, this is no excuse for us, when we call on them to make it. We are carefully to 'forbear threatening,' as the apostle directs, and all other offensive, and irritating language. As much in our intercourse with them, as with those whom we call more our equals, we are to abstain from petulant and complaining habits; from displeasure uncalled for, or unreasonable in degree; or a useless expression of that sentiment, when it is reasonably felt. As far as the difference supposed exists, it should indeed teach us, not a less, but a peculiar caution in these particulars; since violent sallies to an inferior are more a compromitting of one's own dignity, and they are the commission of an outrage where it can be less resented on equal terms. The fidelity of their service is not to be groundlessly suspected; nor such suspicion, when there appears ground for it, to be needlessly uttered; nor, when uttered, in a harsh and wounding manner. They are not to be pained by an arrogant and contemptuous demeanor, for their feelings are often delicate, and are always human. Their faults, when real, are not to be long resented, nor excessively punished, nor tauntingly rebuked; but tenderly at first, and always, as long as correction is attempted at all,

affectionately, at least calmly, blamed. A gentle, — I will say, a respectful, deportment, is the due of such dependents from us, as much as food and shelter; and as far even as the mere attainment of our own purposes goes, it will be found in fact to be the firm and exact, but gentle master, who is the most punctiliously served. Their complaints and their apologies are entitled to a candid consideration from us. 'If I did despise,' well asked Job, 'the cause of my man servant or of my maid servant, when they contended with me, what then shall I do, when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' We should not only hold them exempt from our own peevishness and caprices, but take care to protect them against those of children and others beneath our control, in whose power they may more or less be.

Above all things, we must be just to their characters. Least of all purposes, did they come into our service to be corrupted by our conversation or our solicitations, our example or our commands. If a dependent is directed to do an act, which in his view is criminal, he must not do it, it is true. At the boundary of the strictest innocence, his obligations are discharged. But he may be led to do that act by the habit, or the supposed duty, or the supposed necessity, or the apparent advantage, of obedience to his master's will; and whether he be thus influenced or not, the master's sin, in knowingly attempting to put his authority to such a use, has been a complete, and a treacherous, and a gross one. Such instances as were named in the former connexion, of attempts to engage an apprentice in a fraud, whether in a contract of sale or on the revenue, or a domestic servant in a similar dishonesty in relation to household supplies, or in some agency of licentious vice, are instances in point. And I would seriously ask, whether, in its degree, a practice which one may be well pleased to see declining, if not

almost obsolete among us, does not fall under the head of this remark; — that of directing servants to represent to visitors that we are abroad, when we would reserve our leisure for some other use at home. I am not questioning, that, as between us and our friends, the meaning which we understand each other to attach to words, is their meaning; and so far our integrity is unimpeached. But, will it not be the fact, that most or many of those whom we shall employ, (whatever pains we may take to impress upon their minds the meaning of such language, in its acceptation among us and our friends,) will, after all, understand themselves, when they obey us, to be uttering an untruth; and then will it not be the fact, that we have seduced or tempted them to act unconscientiously; and is not this a cruel injury, a great harm, to do them? Our commands are not the only influence, by which we may do them mischief. Our example is always in their view; and it addresses them, on some accounts, with peculiar force. We are in some sort their superiors; and the very feeling of subordination has some effect on the mind, to recommend what is witnessed in a higher station. And if they are well-disposed, they are disposed to be our friends; to revere, as much as they may, as well as guard our characters; and this feeling inclines them to an indulgent and favorable estimate of what we do, which we may abuse, if we will, to reconcile them to what is reprehensible in us, and would be so in them. Our conversation, — much of it, — is in their hearing. Giving us credit for better information, they are under some influence to adopt our opinions. Looking to us perhaps for a specimen of the habits of thinking, in walks of life, which they consider, at least, to be somewhat higher than their own, they will be apt to attach, in their own estimation, to different subjects, spiritual or worldly, trivial or of consequence, something of the same relative importance, which

it is plain we attach to them, from the place which they hold in our free daily discourse. And this is an added reason of weight, for taking strict heed, that the habits of domestic communion be such, as to make it 'good for the use of edifying,' of exerting a salutary influence on the understanding and heart; at all events, that nothing be admitted into it, of a character to mislead or corrupt any mind.

So much is just and equal to be given by masters to servants, estimating their claim by the standard of the strictest equity. All this is part of the engagement, broadly and religiously construed. And here, as a place of convenient division, I suspend these remarks, hoping to resume them in the afternoon, and to bring before your notice some other demands of the relation, which, if less clearly recognised in the engagement which forms it, are, for the good of both parties, not less important to be met.

SERMON XXIV.

DUTIES OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

COLOSSIANS III. 22 — IV. 1.

SERVANTS, OBEY IN ALL THINGS YOUR MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH; NOT WITH EYE SERVICE, AS MEN PLEASERS, BUT IN SINGLENESS OF HEART, FEARING GOD. AND WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT UNTO MEN; KNOWING THAT OF THE LORD YE SHALL RECEIVE THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE, FOR YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST. BUT HE THAT DOTH WRONG SHALL RECEIVE FOR THE WRONG WHICH HE HATH DONE.

AND THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS; MASTERS, GIVE UNTO YOUR SERVANTS THAT WHICH IS JUST AND EQUAL, KNOWING THAT YE ALSO HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN.

TAKING these words for a text, we began, this morning, to consider the mutual obligations of masters and servants, in that happy state of society, where, whatever can be called servitude, is matter of equal and voluntary contract, and accordingly a condition not more of important usefulness, than of perfect respectability in every proper view. In that class we saw reason, for the purpose in hand, to comprehend apprentices as well as domestic servants, because, though the duties and the privileges belonging to these two spheres of service are not the same, the nature of the rela-

tion is, and consequently the principles of moral obligation connected with both.

We attended to the nature of the obedience due in this sphere, describing it as not extending to anything criminal, nor to anything of arbitrary, oppressive, or unlooked for imposition; and to the spirit in which it needs to be rendered, illustrating this, in various specifications, as a spirit of scrupulous, single-hearted, conscientious, christian faithfulness. Proceeding to the duty of masters, summed up by the apostle in the giving of 'what is just and equal,' we saw that it comprehends, among other minor particulars, prompt payment to a servant of his full wages, whether of money or of instruction; lawful, authorized, and reasonable requisitions of labor; suitable provision; consideration for his convenience and feelings; a candid lenity for his faults; full testimony, when required, to his good qualities; and abstinence from irritating language and deportment, and from everything adapted injuriously to affect his character. So much, it was remarked in conclusion, is just and equal to be given by masters to servants, estimating the claim of the latter by the standard of the strictest equity. All this is part of the engagement, broadly and religiously construed; for it was no part of that engagement, that their condition should be made the worse by the service it pledges them to render to us.

I resume the subject here by asking, whether, in that liberal and christian interpretation of the demands of justice, which represents it as always imposing an obligation where a power exists, we are not to regard it as requiring from masters a service, to such as serve them, beyond what has yet been specified? The general obligation to benevolence, dictating to us to do all good as opportunity may occur, is no doubt strengthened in its requisitions of kindnesses to them, by the intimacy of the relation in which they stand

to us; and should they be withdrawn by sickness from our service, or fall into sickness or want when they have left it, among other like necessitous persons they have a discriminating claim upon our care, on account of the tie which once bound them to us as inmates of the same dwelling, and this claim may be made to approach that of relationship by a long and faithful service. But provision, greater or less, according to need and desert, for those whose service with us is over, is not what I have here in view. My inquiry is, whether, (with all unobtrusive and unostentatious delicacy, no doubt, and for the most part, perhaps, by indirect ways, but still by others, as occasion permits and the disposition of the dependent favors,) advantage should not be expressly taken, by masters, of their control over the occupations, and their influence over the minds, of those by whom they are served, to impart to these the incomparable blessing of religious principle? An incorrigible servant is of course not for our own sakes to be tolerated beneath our roof, unless we are ready to take the hazard of bringing disorders into our household, discredit on our name, and depravity into our children's minds. It is due to them, as well as to ourselves, that their vices should have no countenance, nor, while they are under our authority, go without remonstrance and restraint, from us; and they should soon be made to know, that, not reforming their lives, it is not we whom they can serve. And for those of a different description, does anything less than I have suggested seem to be claimed by the apostle, where, in his first epistle to Timothy, he calls on believing masters 'not to despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because the partakers of the benefit are faithful and beloved;' and again, where, in his epistle to Philemon, he intreats him to receive Onesimus again, as 'above a servant, even as a brother beloved, both in the flesh,'—that is,

as a common son of Adam, — 'and in the Lord,' — that is, as a fellow disciple of Christ?

The privileges, public and private, of the Lord's day, it is manifestly our duty, as little as possible to abridge for them. Those privileges are every one's birthright in a christian land; and except as far as, in a reasonable view, is necessary for the safe and orderly carrying on of the system of life, they cannot be rightfully encroached upon, by any authority. To employ a clerk on that day in his accounts or correspondence, or a domestic servant in attendance upon our pleasures of the road, or of society at home, is far from doing by him what is just and equal. It cannot be regarded as an unauthorized interference, or as transcending our obligations, if we further endeavor that the leisure of the Lord's day, thus kept by us uninvaded, be profitably passed by them in regular attendance on public worship, and a good use of its retirement. At that, and at other times, we shall do well to attend to providing them with such useful and religious reading, as we shall generally find them desirous to command to occupy their vacant hours, and grateful to us if we will undertake to supply. And at that, and at other times, as opportunity occurs, we may well regard ourselves as in the way of rendering good and acceptable service, when we may guide them by advice, which, from their circumstances or characters, they may seem to need; or impress on their minds, by our sincere and affectionate testimony, a sense of the excellence of the christian life. Neither of these offices can be hastily or obtrusively undertaken. Either, attempted in anything of an assuming manner, may be repelled, as implying the claim to a right which is not acknowledged. But when a mutual confidence in each other's good will has grown up, as it ought, both will be welcomed, and desired, and profited by.

It is a great privilege to the inferior members of our household, to unite with us, day by day, in the services of domestic prayer. Vast blessings to them may attend on that opportunity.

For children committed to us to be brought up under our roof, in this capacity, there is an especially strong claim for the exertion of a religious influence; and for systematically exerting it, in that case, at least, an authority is conveyed, which leaves no room for hesitation. The interest, which parents have in them, cannot be communicated to us, nor can all the responsibleness of parents be transferred. But, in the absence of their natural guides, the control, with which we are invested, carries along with it a demand to see such children reared up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' The purity of their morals is our charge. To endeavor to instil christian principles into their minds, and form their characters, while in the forming state, to the christian model, is matter of christian obligation to us.

Apprentices, who are inmates of our families, are, for the time being, in the place to us of children; and, as to religious instruction and advantages, as well as in other respects, must be objects of a similar care. For others, who, while they serve us, remain the sharers of their parents' home, we are dispensed from this responsibility; parental protection, in most respects, continuing still to be extended to them. But there is yet another class, who, I greatly fear, constitute a very exposed portion of society, and for whom it is fully time that more thought was taken. Year by year, there come into the city numbers of youth, of good prospects, of happy promise to their friends, and as yet fair characters, to take at first the subordinate tasks in the business, by which they hope in due time to get their living. Dismissed from the domestic watch of their parents' home, where their purity had hitherto been protected, and

not received into the houses of their employers, they suddenly become, except in their hours of service, completely their own masters at the most tempted age. In the excitement of the first view of a gay and crowded capital, inexperienced, new to the exercise of such entire liberty, they dwell for the most part with a number of their equals, who may improve, or may corrupt them; but, at all events, free, through their hours of leisure, from any control, or effectual oversight. Often, it may be supposed, no cognizance whatever is taken, by their masters, of the way in which they employ the time, not required to be past by them at their place of business. Unquestioned, they are at liberty to disturb the night with their revellings, and profane the sabbath, and annoy its quiet worshippers, with the speed and noise of their excursions of boisterous mirth; and, through the means of this license, falling in with the solicitations and example of bad company, it is to be feared that not a few, without having, like others, principle enough of their own to protect them, are ruined, year by year. I would ask, whether the public quiet is not to be protected from them, or, what is of more consequence, whether their own innocence is not to be protected against their own inexperience? If this is to be done, by whom must it be done, except by masters, to whom alone, in the absence of parents, they are directly responsible? Is it not due from masters to them, to extend some superintendence over the course which they are taking, and endeavor to raise some barriers between them and temptation; to interpose for their security with seasonable counsel; to open to them their own houses, and put them, for their hours of relaxation, in the way of other safe and improving society; to facilitate their attention to useful and engaging studies; to take care that they choose their homes, where the influences of domestic association upon them will be salutary; and to provide for them the

means of a profitable employment of the Lord's day, and have it understood that it is expected of them to employ those means, — as a privilege, if they are wise enough so to esteem it, — and if not, then as a duty, which they who are wiser feel bound to prescribe?

III. As to motives to the mutual discharge of the duties which have been considered, such as are obvious enough are to be found, in the regard which may well be paid to their present interest by the parties respectively; and scripture adds other and higher.

Other things being equal, the most faithful servant will be the most indulgently treated, honorably confided in, and liberally recompensed; and the most equitable and kindest master will be the best served. On neither side is anything apt to be lost by a generous fulfilment of duties to the other. A watchful and earnest fidelity in service, is one of the qualities the surest to inspire esteem, trust, and affection, and numerous opportunities belong to this relation, for manifesting these sentiments in ways to be desired and valued; and the superior's interests, and comfort, and credit, are constantly subject to be promoted by that attentive good-will on the part of dependents, which a suitable deportment on his own part will scarcely fail to excite. The self-denials, which duty may dictate on either side, are not likely to go long without an ample remuneration. And again; apart from, and beyond the more definite advantages, derived from this reciprocation of favors, the happiness of living in a state of harmonious intercourse, of knowing that we are looked upon, and listened to, with respectful and friendly sentiments, is itself worth much more than the endeavors it will cost; endeavors indeed, which, after a little trial, a pleasure will be found in making. In giving an industrious, and vigilant, and skilful attention to their master's interests, servants will be qualifying themselves for a future successful

prosecution of their own. In a frugal use of his property, they will be practising themselves in that prudence, which must be an instrument of their own rise. In establishing a character for trustworthiness and capacity, they will be laying up what hereafter will prove their best stock in trade. And masters may well consider the cares they may take for the religious benefit of their dependents to have been well bestowed, if they look no further than to the uses of the rigid integrity and christian faithfulness, which will thus have been brought into their service, and to the influence to be exerted on their children, by persons having constant access to their minds.

But scripture is careful to place the obligation of both these classes of duties, expressly on the ground of a distinct religious accountableness. As early as the rude times of the Old Testament dispensation, the rights of bondmen were protected by the solemnly sanctioned divine enactment, 'thou shalt not rule over them with rigor, but shalt fear thy God.' And the gospel spoke alike in its own authoritative and benignant spirit, when it enjoined on masters to be just and equal in their exactions and their recompenses, remembering that they too had a master in heaven; a master infinitely higher exalted above them, than they were above any, whose services they used; a master, with whom there was no respect of persons, but from whom, whoever had done wrong, bond or free, should finally receive for the wrong he had done. And on servants it took special care to impress the view, that nothing of what might seem to be the inferiority of their condition, attached to the obligations which in it they were required to fulfil; but that it was a dignified, an exalted service, in which they were enjoined to toil, — a service, which, though men no better than themselves might seem to be its immediate objects, was, in fact, when rendered with conscientious aims, a service rendered

to the greatest of masters, and accordingly of the sublimest kind. 'Ye serve the Lord Christ,' they are told, when ye obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, and, whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. When they are exhorted to an humble submission to them, who came from the hand of nature no better than their equals, and stand in the view of God no higher than as perhaps less favored fellow-children, it is on no grounds implying degradation, but in the character of 'servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men.' They are to count their own masters 'worthy of all honor,' not through the constraint merely of any tie of human obligation, but in view of the pious and noble end, 'that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.' They are to 'show all good fidelity, and please their own masters well in all things,' 'that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' They are to be 'subject to their masters with all fear, and that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;' and the reason is, that 'this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.' They are to be content to 'abide in the same calling wherein they were called,' and having been 'called, being servants, not to care for it,' because 'he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man, likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.' And, finally; as it was to him that their conscientious service was to be rendered, so it was to him, (not to men, who were wholly unable fitly to remunerate it, who were utterly incompetent to bestow such a compensation as they were authorized to hope,) to him that they were to look for its requital, 'knowing that of the Lord they should receive the reward of the inheritance.' The duty of both, in short, was christian duty, required by

the authority of the gospel, and encouraged by its promise of the wages of everlasting life to whoever, striving to 'adorn in all things the doctrine of God their Saviour,' shall at last be found to have been faithful in their province of that service, which is the most 'perfect freedom.'

Through several successive Lord's days, I have been laying before you, my brethren, remarks on the duties of some prominent relations and conditions of life, which had not chanced before to be distinctly considered by us together, within the term of my ministry. The last which I intended to propose, in this series of subjects, is that which has engaged our meditations to day. If there is some disadvantage in discussing such, on account of a large portion of a christian audience not being embraced within the class, whose distinguishing obligations are at any one time set forth, this is partly compensated by the circumstance, that each may, in his turn, find the duties of his place in the social sphere examined, and, (when they are,) exhibited with a special, familiar, and detailed distinctness. If our honor lies in acting well our part, if the question 'Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do,' is to be answered in those indications of providence, which we may read in the condition we are called to fill, then the inquiries, what that condition, what those relations are, and what the duties, (appropriate to each,) in which God is to be served, our fellow-men to be benefited, and our own spiritual interests to be advanced, are inquiries of the highest moment to us. When the multitudes flocked to John the baptist by Jordan, the publicans, and soldiers, and others, severally asked of him rules of life, suited to their respective circumstances; and such rules he gave, recognising thereby the truth, that religion applies and adapts its principles of universal rectitude, to the varied tasks and exigencies of the

different classes and connexions of society; and that to enter into the spirit of this adjustment, — rightly to make this application, — is an important office of religious wisdom. As to the circumstances and relations, which have come under our notice, they are all of so well-defined a nature, that no one, who will but entertain the question, can remain in a moment's uncertainty, whether they are his own, and whether, accordingly, the duties which belong to them, have a claim upon his individual regard. And we have now been endeavoring to give to this easily accessible knowledge a practical use, by examining, with some minuteness, what these respective obligations are.

The investigation, my friends, never inopportune, is not without its congruity with the natural meditations of the season, at which we have arrived; and, in this view, may it not be our aim to attempt to extract some profit from it? We are resolving, it may be, that the coming year, should our lives be prolonged beyond it, shall be remembered by us hereafter as an era of improvement in our characters. To give the resolution efficacy, do we not need to do something more, than form the general purpose of virtuous endeavor? Shall we not do well, to give it definiteness and direction, by representing to ourselves, what those departments of duty are, in which our individual self-discipline is to be exercised? And, as a help to this, may not the specific obligations of the several places which we fill, advantageously be brought under our review? Are we rich or poor, young or old, prosperous or afflicted; and as such have we privileges or trials? As such we have duties too; and if the duties be done, the best of the other privileges will be far surpassed, and the heaviest of the trials may be cheerfully borne. Do we rule, or do we serve? We fill in either case a sphere of responsible, satisfactory, and useful action; and there we, like him whom we should copy, must be about

our Father's business. Do we sustain the filial, or the parental relation, or both; the conjugal, the fraternal, or that of friendship? It is a great thing, to be a good husband or wife, brother or sister, friend, child, or parent. Great benefits are conferred, great happiness is secured, great honor in man's sight, and much more in God's, is won, by the maintenance of that character; and to resolve to be eminently such from this moment, is a glorious resolution, which a man is to be warmly congratulated for having formed.

Forming resolutions of this character, my friends, we are already happy, — sure to be more and more so, the longer and more strenuously we strive to carry them into effect. That is no saw of books, no wordy pretence of the pulpit, that in proportion as we serve God and man, we best serve ourselves, as well for time as for eternity. It is what experience, however evaded, insists on teaching us. You, and I, and every one, according as we have hitherto sought our happiness in this or in other ways, — in the success or the failure, which has attended our endeavors, have begun to learn, from experience, that great and governing truth. We are learning it better and better. The testimony of every finished year, as yet, has added, if we have listened to it, to the distinctness of this conviction; and every coming year, should others come, will utter to us, before it parts, its own acquiescence in the lesson of all which have preceded. My wish, then, has the strictest possible accordance, my friends, with the wishes which soon will greet you, when I pray God, that the year, about to begin, may be to those, who shall survive to do its work, and gather its experience, an innocent, a useful, and a religious year; a year of stern self-control, of prosperous benevolent endeavor, and of vigorous growth in grace.

THE END.